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Housing in The Sky

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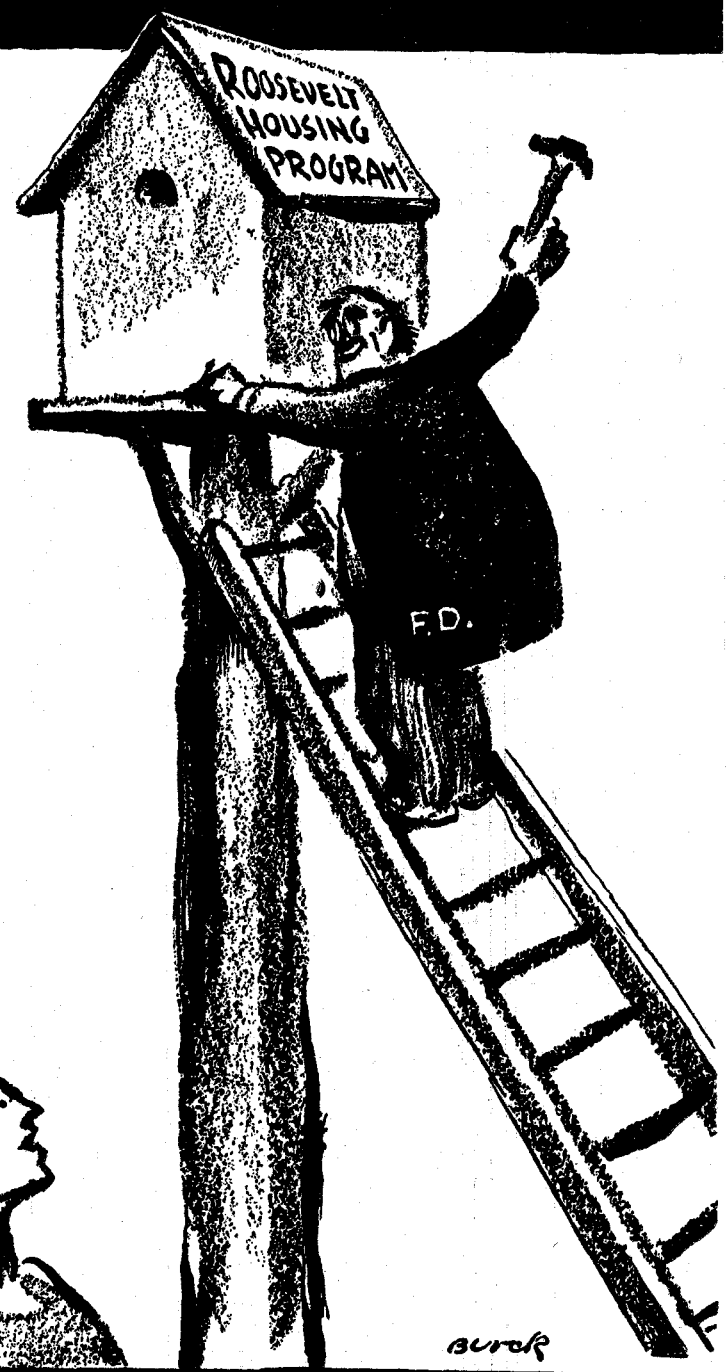

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New Masses

MAY 21, 1935

The Housing Collapse

WE had been hearing for some time about the 450 million dollars "earmarked for low rental housing and slum clearance." Just as we were watching the skyline to see some of it go up the Public Works Administration announced early in May that "of the $135,800,000 already allotted" for these purposes (by federal and local government) "only the small sum of $7,000,000 had actually been spent and this only for land purchases." Keeping up the illusion, Mayor La Guardia on May 1 presented the President with a 150 million dollar housing program for New York City alone, which, he declared, was to be only a "part of a larger one contemplating the eventual expenditure of $1,506,000,000 on low cost housing of all types." On his return from Washington, the Mayor said: "I am satisfied things are going to move now. I think we'll have more steam shovels and fewer typewriters at work in a short time." But on May 4, the typewriters in the White House revealed the real truth. The New York Times on that date stated:

> President Roosevelt was considering dividing up the housing fund, allotting only a comparatively small amount for slum clearance, and . . . would put most of the $800,000,000 which he is authorized to transfer from one earmarked fund to another into rapid-spending programs like that of the C.C.C.

In the article, "Housing in the Sky," in this issue, Sidney Hill gives the reasons why the Administration cannot possibly carry out more than a fraction of its promises to abolish firetraps and provide decent homes that workers can afford.

ON STRIKE! WE FIGHT TERROR
STRIKE FOR LIVING WAGES! AND SHORTER HOURS!
ON STRIKE SMASH THE COMPANY UNION! AGAINST BOSSES TERROR
WE DEMAN DECEN WAGE STR N

"My God, Roger! Only yesterday I told them we were one big, happy family!" *Redfield*

Europe After Pilsudski

THE death of Poland's dictator leaves the capitalist European powers in greater confusion than ever. Pilsudski, ex-revolutionist, ex-Social Democrat and one of the bitterest enemies of Soviet Russia, held his power through a military dictatorship as repressive and brutal as any existing in Europe. Now that he is dead there will not only be a bitter internal struggle to gain control of the army, but a desperate contest among the other powers to capture Poland as an ally. Ever since the first murmurs of a pact between France and Soviet Russia were heard, Poland slowly but surely has been gravitating in the direction of Germany. She has finally repudiated her post-war alliance with France, which had kept Pilsudski well supplied with guns and money when he, backed by the Polish Social Democrats, was leading the war against the Soviets in 1918-22. The fight to control the immediate future of Poland now lies among three major political groups whose programs are almost exclusively based on foreign policy: (1) The military clique; (2) The pro-French party supported by conservatives, bankers, industrialists; and (3) The pro-German party, supported by big landowners, kulaks and various groups upholding fascist ideas.

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There are many reasons to believe that for the time being at least the military clique, backed by the pro-German party will continue in power, a situation which makes an attack upon the Soviet Union and a general war in Europe more likely every day.

FOR that war all of Europe continues feverishly to arm itself. Each day one reads of vaster plans for armaments, for bigger navies, deadlier gases, more destructive bombs. Civilians are being prepared for air raids, tricked out with gas masks and fully photographed by the propaganda departments of their respective countries. Goering with his dreams of universal slaughter boasts that Germany within the next year will have an air fleet of 16,000 planes and that soon the sun will never set on the Nazi swastika. Britain has almost doubled her army, navy and air appropriations, while France and Italy, not to be outstripped in the race for military power, are conscripting everyone capable of carrying a rifle. In the other hemispheres the United States has increased its army and navy appropriations and is at present busily making believe that it is fighting a naval battle with Japan, which in turn gears up its munitions factories for further campaigns in China and for a possible war with the United States. Soviet Russia alone, preoccupied with its task of establishing a Socialist state, but forced by the constant threat of attack from the East and the West to arm itself, makes a determined effort to prevent the world from plunging into a new war.

Death in Africa

TO DEFEND Rome and fatherland from the Ethiopians, Mussolini has mobilized, or has sent, 150,000 troops into Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. This "defensive" move, as the Duce labels it, is necessitated by the not unnatural resentment by Abyssinia to Italian mobilization. On its side, Italy objects to the purchase of arms and munitions by the Negro State—such purchases interfere with Italy's peaceful protestations which accompany every move preparatory to invading Abyssinia and reducing it to the status of a colony. To such objections, Germany, Japan, Sweden and other countries answer that no munition sales have been made—and continue to carry on a very profitable, land-office business. At the same time, young recruits arriving in Africa aboard Italian transports find that the romantic pictures of war in a colorful foreign land do not accord with the Duce's rousing, martial speeches which failed to mention malaria, typhus, dysentery or even the intense heat, the scarcity of drinking water, the long, dusty, hot marches in the desert. The "adventure and romance" of war proves to be more appealing in speeches than in experience.

A Vicious Tax Bill

WHEN such aesthetes as New York's Aldermen suddenly concern themselves with the cultural situation we may well become suspicious. Of course there was no real cause for surprise when three weeks ago the city authorities expressed official hostility to dancers, musicians and other artists on relief. For, after all, an aldermanic "exposure" of boon-doggling was just the sort of arrogant stupidity one has learned to expect from the relief program and its overseers. Far more serious are the two bills now under consideration by the Aldermen, which propose to license and regulate certain schools and colleges. The Sullivan Bill could be dismissed as aldermanic idiocy were it not a grave threat to nearly everyone engaged in the arts. Under its proposals all schools of dancing, dramatics, music, radio, voice culture and all teachers of these professions would be required to obtain licenses on the following basis: $25 to be paid for the privilege of submitting to an examination and $25 to $200 for the license, if the applicant "passes." But that is not all. He must post a minimum bond of $1,000. If he uses his own studio for teaching, he must obtain a license before he can exercise this privilege. If he gives instruction in other rooms as well, he must have a license for each of them. Furthermore, each cubicle harboring instruction must live up to the present and future rules of the Fire Department, Building Department, Health Department and Police Department, and must be open at all times to visits by their inspectors. A substitute bill written by the Department of Licenses broadens the jurisdiction to include all trade, vocational and occupational schools.

THE official explanation for this sudden interest in the future of culture can delude no one who examines the situation. The Sullivan Bill, it is said, will swell the city treasury; the substitute bill will wipe out fraudulent institutions and brothels now operating under the name of "schools." But in taxing a profession famous for its impoverishment, the Sullivan Bill not only would fail to bring revenue: it would drive hundreds of these teachers out of work altogether. (A musician, for example, who instructs pupils in their homes would have to buy a separate license for every home visited.) As for the second bill, there are plenty of ordinances against fraud and prostitution, making further legislation superfluous. The forces behind these bills are not interested in the alleged excess wealth of cultural teachers, in corrupt business practice or sexual impurity. They are urgently interested in controlling ideas —such fearless, progressive ideas, for example, as those taught and expressed by the New Theatre training school, the New Dance League, the Theatre Union, the Group Theatre training schools, the Workers' Music School, not to mention the entire curriculum of The Workers' School. The dancer, musician, artist, committed to no particular program can imagine how much freedom he will have in exercising his profession when compelled at all times to earn the approval of the Department of Licenses suddenly installed as Cultural Censor. Either bill, if passed, would empower the city government to suppress all cultural activities in the labor movement; to revoke licenses from any individual or group daring to expose the corruption and misery for which the government is responsible; and to muzzle any attempt at improving the conditions of cultural workers in particular and the wage-earning classes as a whole.

Banks and Sharecroppers

THE Bankhead Bill, to "create a Farm Tenant Homes Corporation," and "for other purposes," pretends to bring about at last the liberation of the Negro and white sharecroppers from their traditional serfdom. In reality it will change this serfdom to out-and-out peonage. This is the main purpose of the bill. The "other purposes" are frankly revealed by Senator Bankhead himself, in a radio speech which was read into the Congressional Record of February 19:

> As most of you farm folks know, there is a lot of farm land that is owned by the banks, insurance companies and what are called "absentee landlords." Most of this land is worked by tenants, and many

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of these landlords and owners are anxious to dispose of this land because it is out of their line of business. In many instances it was acquired since boom times through foreclosures.

Thus Bankhead proposes to bail out the banks and insurance companies stuck with unprofitable holdings. Senator Borah helped him by suggesting that the bill expressly forbid use of condemnation proceedings. An amendment to this effect, acceptable to Senator Bankhead, would assure high prices to landlords and guard against the necessity of their selling the government any but sub-marginal lands.

Powerful Pamphlets

THE means of communication with the general public — the press, radio, movies, etc., are in capitalist hands. Can the spokesmen of the radical movement break through? One promising attempt is being made by The Book Union, a left-wing book-of-the-month club. Another may be seen in successful operation on street corners in many cities. Nickel pamphlets exposing the fascist demagogues Father Coughlin and Huey Long are being sold on newsstands, subway platforms, street corners and inside factories, and are going like hot cakes. Of the Coughlin pamphlet, *The Truth About Father Coughlin,* by A. B. Magil, 130,000 have been sold within a month and 200,000 more in a single edition are being run off. Of the Long pamphlet, *The Truth About Huey Long,* by Sender Garlin, 50,000 have been sold in ten days and another edition of 200,000 is being rushed from the press. In New Orleans Mayor Walmsley, Long's supposed foe, signalized his own united front with Long by convicting sellers of the Long pamphlet as disturbers of the peace. In Cleveland, sellers of the Coughlin pamphlet at a Coughlin meeting were clubbed by the police. In Detroit, in spite of intimidation, the Coughlin pamphlets are sold inside the auto factories. What accounts for the enormous success of these two pamphlets? Unquestionably the subject matter is what the publishing trade calls a "natural," but the pamphlets were written by two of the ablest revolutionary journalists; the writing is vigorous, direct and factual, but factual not merely in the statistical sense; the facts are dramatized and made alive. The choice of titles and the lively get-up of the two pamphlets are a factor in their success. Through the production of such well-conceived popular appeals, as already shown by the success of Moissaye J. Olgin's pamphlet, *Why Communism,* a powerful propaganda weapon is being forged, to break through the blockade.

New Masses

VOL. XV, No. 8 CONTENTS MAY 21, 1935

Editorial Comment 3
Sabotaging the Bonus..... 6
The Supreme Court Says "No"..... 7
Housing in the Sky:
The Collapse of the Roosevelt Program
Sidney Hill 9
The Frameup in Gallup.....A. L. Wirin 12
Prisoners of the Class War..... 14
Fraternity Minus the Bunk..Bruce Minton 15
Self-Criticism in Soviet Cartoons..... 16
What Is Communism?
3: Who Will Lead the Revolution?
Earl Browder 18
Washington—Jim-Crow Capital
2: "Friends of the Negro"
Marguerite Young 20
Correspondence 23
Review and Comment
Kenneth Fearing: A Poet for Workers
Edward Dahlberg 24
Studs Lonigan in Conclusion
Josephine Herbst 25
Thunder Over the Pacific
Donald Hemsley 26
He Didn't Die in Bed...Bruce Minton 27
The Dance.....Stanley Burnshaw 28
The Pulitzer Prizes.....Robert Forsythe 29
Between Ourselves 30
Drawings by
William Gropper, Mackey, Redfield, 173

EDITORS:

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WILLIAM BROWDER, *Business Manager*

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Sell-Out in Toledo

AT a hard fought battle on May 13 the strike committee of the Toledo Chevrolet workers succeeded in forcing through a resolution which denied the floor to Francis Dillon, A. F. of L. fixer in Detroit who had been negotiating a sell-out in private conferences with W. C. Knudsen and other General Motors executives. After Dillon had left the hall, amid boos and shouts of "Let's drive him out, we can settle without him," the rank and file committee, headed by James Roland, continued the struggle to reject the company's proposals, but the final vote in favor of returning to work was 732 against 385. As we go to press, the workers are preparing to strike in Flint, Mich. In Norwood, Ohio, and Atlanta, Georgia, Chevrolet workers are still holding out. This temporary setback for the union followed the overwhelming vote of 1,261 to 605 on May 8, to throw out the offers of the General Motors to end the strike. The strike had been solid since April 23, in spite of desperate efforts on the part of the company union, the Independent Workers' Association, to break it, and the openly treacherous policy of Dillon, who only a few days ago, at an open meeting of 5,000 Toledo workers, said that he "would like to see all General Motors plants strike immediately." President Roosevelt's Automobile Labor Board, set up to bring industrial "peace" by betraying the automobile workers in March, 1934, has been completely ignored by Local 18384 of the United Automobile Workers' Federal Labor Union, which was leading the men.

THE memorandum of the proposal which Dillon urged the workers to accept promises meager improvement of conditions, but rejects a union contract and refuses to set aside the Automobile Labor Board. On May 14 there were press reports that the company conceded the right to a shop committee of nine and agreed to deal with representatives of the union. Time and a half instead of double time for overtime and an increase of four cents an hour instead of the 40 percent demanded are among the proposals, but the corporation said nothing about giving the workers a voice in re-timing to reduce the inhuman speed up. Every effort will be made to force the company union into the foreground, and whittle away the solidarity of the mili-

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tant workers, but the 20-day strike of the United Auto Workers shows a tremendous increase of strength and class consciousness on the part of a huge body of workers hitherto practically unorganized. The morning after Dillon's sell-out (which William Green promptly approved) picketing was resumed in Toledo and maintenance men didn't get to their jobs.

Wallace Turns "Left"

ON APRIL 20 the Secretary of Agriculture claimed a mighty stride to the left in a press release headed "Minimum wages set for sugar beet field labor in four western areas." This straddle turns out to be the result of collaboration between the government and the Great Western Sugar Refining Company—ruler of the western dynasty of beet sugar production. Beet workers and their families contract to thin, top and harvest beets at so much per acre per season. At public hearings recently held in the field, workers were demanding from $23 to $27 an acre. This meant $250 to $300 per family per year. Angered by the growers offers of from $17 to $19 an acre and disillusioned by former sell-outs, the exploited workers threatened strike. The Department of Agriculture, counselling "patience" and "cooperation," hesitated to come in and set rates for fear of offending the growers. Then the President of the Great Western Sugar Company stepped forward. Calling the Sugar Section on the phone, he pointed out the advantages of setting wages. First, this will prevent strikes by permanently committing workers to a low wage. Second, it will avoid awkward questions of hours and child slavery. Third, it will permit control of these advantages by withholding payments "to insure the faithful performance of the contract."

THE Sugar Section agreed with the Great Western Sugar Company to take this militant step to the "left" in the interest of the workers. It also tactfully asked the Company what rates it thought just. The reply was $17.50 (Southern Colorado), $19.50 (Northern Colorado, Nebraska and Wyoming) and $21.50 (Montana and Wyoming). By a strange coincidence these became the figures which Wallace announced April 20. They are slightly higher than those paid in 1934—and much lower than those paid in 1928-29 when sugar was selling at the same price as this year. These rates mean permanent low-grade standards of living—child labor, peonage through the withholding of wages, greatly increased difficulties in organizing farm workers. Yet elated liberals pat their tummies down in Washington, and chalk up another "leftward" step for the greater glory of Roosevelt.

Sabotaging the Bonus

TO VETO the bonus bill or not to veto it—this was one of the major dilemmas facing the autocrat of the White House breakfast table over the week end. It was indicated that he would veto it: whether the veto would be sustained in the Senate was uncertain.

It is hardly necessary to say that THE NEW MASSES considers the utterances and actions of the official American Legion leaders in connection with the bonus issue beneath contempt. They not only made no protest when the rank and file bonus marchers were driven from Washington by fire and sword but approved of the atrocities inflicted on the veterans and their dependents by Chief of Staff General MacArthur — the swivel chair artist who is the petted darling of Washington society—and the Hoover administration. These leaders organize fascist vigilante attacks on workers who support the bonus demands. But for the rank and file of the former members of the national army that was recruited "to make the world safe for democracy" the immediate payment of the bonus is a living issue—to many actually a matter of life and death.

The consistent refusal of the Roosevelt administration to establish federal unemployment insurance, the cruel inadequacy of the public works program, the housing program that was supposed to provide several millions with jobs but which has to date built only some 180 dwellings, the cutting of the wages of relief workers on public projects to $12 per week, and the steady decline in industrial production, have combined to bring the bonus payment issue again to the forefront in the minds of hundreds of thousands of veterans. They see it as a temporary way out of the destitution and humiliation to which they are subjected by the various relief agencies.

The munitions investigation conducted by the Nye committee, in spite of administration sabotage and the crawling timidity of committee members when faced by buccaneers of the Baruch and du Pont type, proved, if it proved nothing else, that the main opponents of the immediate payment of the bonus are those individuals and monopolistic corporations who made world war into the most profitable business enterprise of the century — and who are now preparing a new war.

On the other hand, there are those "friends" of the veterans like Coughlin, Long, Thomas of Oklahoma, Wheeler of Montana, Patman of Texas, etc., advocates of inflation by remonetization of silver or by additional paper currency issues, or both, who are willing to give the veterans their back pay at once but in a dollar whose purchasing power will be lowered so much by inflation that no one can now predict the exact low level to which it will drop.

Eccles, governor of the Federal Reserve Board, and Jones, head of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, if one is to judge by their recently reported remarks, are in favor of payment of the bonus—by inflation. The statements in favor of the bonus payment by these two important cogs in the administration are an indication of the tremendous popular pressure for the bonus.

Two billion dollars additional currency—the amount that it was proposed to issue to pay off the veterans—would have sent rapidly rising prices skyrocketing and put another huge burden on the bowed backs of the working people of this country. There can be no question that big banking circles already had a scheme worked out by which financiers would cash in on the bonus payment in the way proposed.

There is only one way to pay off the veterans and put the burden where it belongs—on those multi-millionaires and the giant trusts they control: Turn over the war appropriations — already

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around the billion dollar mark—to unemployment insurance and the bonus; by the most drastic taxation of those individuals and corporations who made billions out of the last war.

What would Roosevelt do? The coterie of slippery schemers of reaction he gathered around him for consultation last weekend — consisting of Speaker of the House Byrns, Vice-President Garner, Postmaster General Farley, Senator Robinson of Arkansas, Harrison of Mississippi—gave the answer: Roosevelt would smile — and sabotage the bonus legislation. The guarantee for the payment of the bonus in a form that will relieve poverty-stricken veterans lies in their unity with the unemployed and the labor movement, in joint mass action for their demands.

The Supreme Court Says "No"

THE Supreme Court on May 6 by a five to four decision threw out the Railroad Retirement Act, declaring that Congress had no constitutional right to pass a law making pensions for aged railroad workers compulsory. The law, which was passed in June, 1934 as a result of widespread pressure, provided a retirement and pension system for all railroads subject to the Interstate Commerce Act. Pensions averaging $61 per month were to be paid out of a fund raised by contributions of 2 percent of pay from employes and double that amount from the companies. Retirement age was set at sixty-five. The adverse decision affects more than a million workers in 134 railroads, two express companies and the Pullman Company.

In its findings, the majority of the court made no pretense of concealing its class bias. Mr. Justice Roberts, author of this document, said it was an "unwarranted extension" of the Constitutional clause permitting the regulation of interstate commerce by Congress, "to utilize it for the improvement of morale among rail employes." "We cannot agree," the decision states, "that these ends [the security of workers in old age], if dictated by statute and not voluntarily extended by the employer, encourage loyalty and continuity of service." To "substitute legislative largess for private bounty" would not make for loyalty and continuity of service, because "gratitude to the employer" would disappear.

The minority decision gave an opportunity to Chief Justice Hughes to pose as the workingman's friend. The "liberal" element of the court is supporting the Roosevelt administration, in the hope of minimizing mass resistance to policies that lead straight to fascism. Justice Hughes has experienced the power of mass protest. Recently the court has yielded four times to it in granting two Scottsboro hearings, the hearing on Angelo Herndon and the gesture in favor of Tom Mooney. Chief Justice Hughes is becoming sensitive. He therefore delivers himself of an indignant rebuttal.

Supporting, by a lengthy argument, the constitutionality of the compensation acts, he says: "When we go to the heart of the matter we find that compensation and pension measures rest upon similar basic considerations," and "the fundamental consideration which supports this type of legislation is that industry should take care of its human wastage, whether it is due to accident or not."

How much the Supreme Court has been interested in "human wastage" may be shown by the barest examination of its decisions. In no case involving any important industrial question has the court ruled in favor of labor. Here are some of its major positions on the rights of workers:

It has upheld convictions in criminal syndicalism cases (Gitlow and Whitney) and declared that states might constitutionally enact legislation limiting free speech.

It has found a statute in New York State unconstitutional because it limited work in bakeshops to ten hours a day.

It held that minimum wages could not be fixed by states, and child labor could not be prohibited.

It sustained sweeping injunctions against labor on the ground of interference with state commerce; it has held that a union had no right to make a rule prohibiting work on non-union material on the same ground (in the railway decision just rendered where the employers are favored, the court stated that pensions had no relation to interstate commerce).

It declared, in the Hitchman Case in West Virginia, that there was no such thing as peaceful picketing.

It construed the Clayton Act in such a way that the Act—hailed by the A. F. of L. as the charter of labor—became a new ground for granting labor injunctions; when Kansas passed a law identical with the Clayton Act, the court declared it unconstitutional.

In the first Scottsboro decision it held that a defendant had a right to counsel; in the second it held that a Negro had a right to be tried by a jury drawn from rolls on which Negro names appeared; neither decision did anything to prevent discrimination against Negroes.

On the day it decided the second Scottsboro case, the court gave the Democratic Party power to exclude Negroes from voting at its primaries.

This is the labor-hating record of the Supreme Court. Again and again favorable legislation wrested from the states and from Congress by organized workers has been blocked by a majority of one. On the other hand, in the face of determined mass demands, the court has backed down. It sustained the Adamson eight-hour-day provision, which was passed under the threat of a railway strike.

Justice Hughes' objection to the Railroad Retirement Act was that it was not a "reasonably conceived" pension bill. Such a bill he inferred might be constitutional even to the reactionaries of the court. But by "reasonably conceived" the Chief Justice means a measure that will permit industry to contest successfully every individual pension case, as it has done from the beginning in compensation cases. Roosevelt, in signing the law which has just been scrapped, said that it was "crudely drawn," but it is obviously a part of the New Deal's demagogy to secure some sort of a rail pension law and silence the urgent demands of the Brotherhoods and rank and file rail workers. The Supreme Court consists of nine worried old men. The millions left insecure and at the mercy of "employers' bounty" by this decision can keep on worrying them until they sustain retirement pensions that can be enforced in practice.

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THE LOUSY GAME

William Gropper

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Housing in the Sky

The Collapse of the Roosevelt Program

SIDNEY HILL

AS ANYONE knows who reads the headlines, listens to the radio or goes to the movies, the Roosevelt Administration has a Slum Clearance and Low Rental Housing Program.

In 1933, the front pages proclaimed: U. S. SLUM CLEARING PROJECTED—GOVERNMENT UNIT TO BUILD LOW RENTAL HOUSING.

In 1934: PRESIDENT TO PUSH HOUSING FOR POOR.

And only yesterday there appeared again the familiar slogan: U. S. PROMISES MILLIONS FOR HOUSING.

The first thing to be said of the New Deal Program is that, after two years of promises, it has cleared no slums and built not a single low rental dwelling.

The second thing is that the complete collapse of the official housing schemes represents only one phase of the Administration's Program. There is another side to this program which is by no means a failure—but a most significant and unequivocal success, and that is the propping up, with massive pillars of gold, scores of bankrupt, semi-bankrupt, moribund banks and mortgage institutions. For the purpose of analysis it will be seen to be entirely fitting that we refer to the first phase as the "left" arm of the housing program and to the second as the "right."

LET us first study the surface aspects of the "left" arm—the arm of public, low-cost housing and slum clearance. We call this the "left" arm because of the radical phrases with which it was launched. Administrator Ickes said: "The Public Works Administration intends to take the initiative in slum clearance and low-cost housing projects in the interest of unemployment relief and recovery."[1] And Horatio B. Hackett, Director of Housing, Public Works Administration, said: "The Government is undertaking the job which private capital has never been able to handle."

Housing, it must be understood, is not an isolated issue, but is closely integrated with the whole economy. We see that Roosevelt's Housing Program was part of the Public Works Administration, the purpose of which was "to increase the consumption of industrial and agricultural products by increasing purchasing power, to reduce and relieve unemployment, to improve standards of labor and otherwise to rehabilitate industry and to conserve natural resources."[2] This theory of public works as a solution to economic crisis is not new. The idea is that when private industry declines and unemployment increases, additional government projects will be undertaken to start the wheels running again.

Without doubt, it is supererogatory at this date to prove that the public works theory did not work. Nevertheless, it is well worth reviewing some of the items involved.

VALUE OF CERTAIN CONSTRUCTION IN THE UNITED STATES[3]

	Public Works and Utilities	*Residential*
1928	$1,758,480,000	$3,344,317,000
1933	724,722,000	298,826,000
1934	803,236,000	298,260,000

Our table speaks for itself. It shows that for the New Deal years of 1933 and 1934, the annual value of construction of public works and utilities, including the P.W.A. upon which recovery depended, was less than half of 1928 and only about 60 percent of the so-called "normal" total of 1926.

Moreover, these figures give us a good opportunity for measuring the real intentions of the administration housing program. When Roosevelt took office, residential construction had fallen to less than 10 percent of its former level. The reader, however, may recall that only $150,000,000, an absurdly insignificant sum (compare it with the residential total for 1928), was "earmarked" under the P.W.A.[4] in 1933 for housing in the entire country. But he probably does not know that a few months ago $93,000,000 of it was transferred to the Federal Emergency Relief Administration *and that most of the balance is still unexpended.* In New York City, residential construction in 1928 amounted to $582,279,000 and in 1933 it was less than $30,000,000. The P.W.A., however, allotted only $25,000,000 for New York housing and slum clearance and to date, two years later, *not one cent of it has actually been spent for that purpose.*

Many reasons are offered to account for Roosevelt's failure to achieve any low rental housing or clear any slums. It is true, for example, that Real Estate Boards and Chambers of Commerce objected to government housing on the grounds of unfair competition with private business. Joseph P. Day, prominent realty man, said of the housing program, "I must frankly call it communistic or socialistic."

But it must be obvious by now that Roosevelt never had any intention of competing with Mr. Day or the interests he represents. Indeed, it is entirely proper to say that when the "left" arm of the housing program is viewed in the light of Roosevelt's real intentions, it is not a failure at all. The President's "liberal" slogans about "the challenge of the slums" and "decent homes for American workers" and Administrator Ickes' "radical" attacks on "private enterprise" stand revealed as just so much hokum. Their demagogy is obviously designed to distract our attention from the doings of the other side of the New Deal program.

THE "right" arm of the housing program differs from the "left" in that it stands for "private building with private capital." Essentially, however, its purpose is "to restore confidence in ownership and investment." In contrast to the lone Mr. Ickes, who is gallantly doing his duty on the "left," the President has no end of assistance on the "right." Unfortunately, limitations of space demand that we consider only the more important of these.

1) The Home Owners Loan Corporation was set up by an Act of Congress in June, 1933, "to save the distressed urban homeowner, whose property is mortgaged, from losing it through foreclosure." For this purpose, there was provided a fund of $2,000,000,000. In April, 1934, another billion was voted by Congress. The H.O.L.C. relieves the distressed home owner in the following manner: First, it gives the mortgage holder (the bank) its good 4 percent negotiable bonds in exchange for the defaulted mortgage. This old mortgage is then replaced by a new one, the net result of which is that the homeowner is now indebted to the H.O.L.C. instead of the bank.

John H. Fahey, President of the H.O.L.C., reports that to date about three billion

[1] Statement of Policy of the Public Works Emergency Housing Corporation Bulletin No. 7395.

[2] Declaration of Policy of the National Industrial Recovery Act.

[3] This table is based on data of the F. W. Dodge Corporation covering the thirty-seven states east of the Rocky Moutains. To these figures was added an arbitrary 20 percent to cover the remaining states.

[4] All that can be said for the accomplishments of the Housing Division of the P.W.A. is that since 1933, it has started only seven projects of which two or three are thus far completed. These projects are all of the limited dividends type which means that they are privately built and owned, the P.W.A. supplying the money. The rents will not be low by any means, the average being over $10 per month per room or over $50 per month for a five-room dwelling. The total value of these housing projects will be $12,271,678, and only 3,285 families will be provided for in contrast to a need which Secretary of Commerce Roper estimates at "five million habitable dwellings." In addition to these private, limited-dividend projects, the P.W.A. vaguely planned to engage in direct-government housing but The New York Times of May 4 reports that in this connection "only the small sum of seven million dollars has been spent, and this largely for land purchases."

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dollars have been paid out to take over the mortgages on some one million small homes, and that "more than 90 percent of this money has gone to the commercial banks, saving banks, insurance companies, building and loan associations and mortgage companies."

It is significant that, despite the title of his organization, Mr. Fahey says nothing about the benefits to the home owner. Well, the truth is there are none. Indeed, if anything, the poor fellow is even worse off than he was before. His old mortgage usually required only the payment of interest with no reduction of principal. The H.O.L.C. mortgage, however, involves not only a good sized interest charge, but a regular amortization of the principal. Mathew Napear, Chairman of the Consolidated Home and Farm Owners' Mortgage Committee, sent a statement to President Roosevelt on December 3, 1934, saying, "An investigation would show that 70 percent of the home loans already granted were likely to default, due to excessive charges." The statement also asserted that 5 percent interest and fifteen-year amortization impose an unbearable burden on many hard-pressed home owners.

Mr. Fahey's answer was prompt. The very next day he said: "A few of the Corporation's borrowers are apparently under the mistaken notion that the H. O. L. C. intends to be unduly lenient, even to the extent of permitting them to retain their homes without payment of interest or principal upon their loans." Threatening immediate foreclosure, he went on to state that "the H. O. L. C. will not permit the mortgagors (homeowners) to take unfair advantage of the generosity of the government which has rendered them a great service." It will be remembered that the government was much more lenient with the big fellows like General Dawes, whose bank defaulted on millions borrowed from the R. F. C.

Representative O'Connor of New York, who has "grave doubts" as to the advisability of extending the life and powers of the Corporation, naively complains that he is "apprehensive that some day we may wake up and find that something has been put over on us whereby we will find that financial institutions have dipped into the Federal Treasury and unloaded millions of sour mortgages on the Federal Government." In the meantime, the House has already passed the Steagall Bill aiming to expand the funds of the Corporation. According to The World-Telegram of Feb. 11, 1935:

> The addition of H.O.L.C.'s resources will increase its lending power to $4,750,000,000. When the program is completed the government will hold a lien on one out of every four homes in the country.

TO understand the significance of all this, it is necessary to know several other facts. The mortgage indebtedness of homes in the United States is $21,000,000,000. Of this sum, 75 percent is held by banks, insurance companies, mortgage associations, etc., the major investments of which are in such mortgages. Soon after the crash of 1929, homes were being foreclosed at the rate of 20,000 a month. But what do banks do with great masses of foreclosed homes? Sooner or later, they begin dumping them on the real estate market in order to remain solvent. On a large scale, however, this tends further to demoralize their market. And so, as the crisis deepened, the rate of foreclosure rose until in 1933 when Roosevelt took office, the financial institutions faced widespread collapse.

Did Roosevelt say to the banks and other lending institutions: "Now see here, gentlemen, times are very bad. The depression has wiped out the savings of about 25 percent of the home owners of the country and they are finding it increasingly difficult to meet their obligations. If the people are to save their homes and achieve the 'security' I promised them, you must have faith in your President. You must declare a moratorium on mortgage payments and foreclosures until the emergency is passed. And that, of course, is only a matter of months."

He said nothing of the kind. We see now that Roosevelt's H. O. L. C., although set up ostensibly to "relieve the distressed home owner," actually relieved only the financial institutions. It took over their defaulted mortgages and thus served to save a huge portion of their investments and profits. It did more than that. As Mr. Fahey put it in a statement on July 12, 1934, "Since the Home Owners Loan Act was amended, real estate values throughout the country have stopped their downward trend."

ON THE other hand, the fact has not escaped the President that the homes and "security" which he dangled before the hungry eyes of the workers and farmers of the country are still a long way off, and that the defaulted mortgages which hung like millstones on the necks of the distressed home owner are still weighing him down.

> But, my dear friends, we can hear Mr. Roosevelt objecting, the banks and insurance companies are the cornerstone of the nation's credit. And now that the government itself has become the largest mortgagee in the country, you can't reasonably expect us to go ahead and build low-rental housing and so endanger real estate values. It wouldn't be American. It wouldn't be businesslike. Furthermore, we have other plans for these unfortunate people.

And indeed he has. Under cover of the false promises and hollow liberalism from its "left," the New Deal is driving the fifteen million unemployed and relief-workers into even deeper misery and into more wretched housing. For some of these millions, it plans removal to subsistence farms where they may eke out a bare existence from an acre or two of ground and thus relieve the government of further responsibility. For others it has the C. C. C. camps where young men are given lessons in discipline by the U. S. Army. And now there is also the four billion dollar work-relief plan under which the unemployed will be compelled to work for their relief of $50 a month, thereby forcing down the wages of all employed workers. This reduction of the wage scale will make even more remote the possibility that the worker will be able to pay the rentals necessary to get out of his slum.

IN THE meanwhile, there is no let-up in the assistance and cooperation which Roosevelt is extending to the banks and financiers.

2) The second agency of the "right" arm of Roosevelt's housing program is the Federal Farm Mortgage Corporation. Since this corporation was organized to do for the distressed farmer what the H. O. L. C. is already doing for his brother in the city, it is unnecessary to say much more except to note that it was provided with a fund of two billion dollars.

3) But this is not the end of the Administration's activity in this field. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation, which incidentally is not only a Hoover creation but still retains Jesse Jones as its chief, has never stopped its assistance to the needy mortgage institutions. It would seem that, in this respect, the New Deal is not so new after all.

4) We now come to the Federal Housing Administration created in June, 1934, under the National Housing Act. The first section of this Act was popularly known as the "renovising" program. Its object was to induce home owners to borrow money for home repairs by means of an intense national advertising campaign. The publicity basis for this campaign was the National Real Property Inventory conducted by the Department of Commerce. This survey revealed that the homes of the country were in amazingly wretched condition. According to Administrator Moffett "Approximately 16,500,000 buildings throughout the nation are in need of repair and the country has today a shortage of from 750,000 to 1,500,000 homes. The survey figures show that 5,000,000 homes in the United States lack even the commonest facilities."

In spite of the admitted need, and in spite of the demands of the building materials and construction interests who were also trying to chisel into this government "relief," the renovising program was a fizzle. Mr. Moffett, in answering criticisms of the delay in getting the repair program under way, explained that this was only the "emergency" section of the National Housing Act. The main and "long term" thing to be done, he said, "is to rehabilitate a large portion of the $21,000,000,000 worth of home mortgages now held by financial institutions." But if that is the case, what was the purpose of gathering all these facts about the miserable conditions of the homes of the nation? As Dr. Ernest Fisher of the Department of Real Estate at the University of Michigan explains it, "Prime use of the inventory facts by the Federal Housing Administration will be the

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setting up on an entirely new basis for estimating loan risks. Thus a new day approaches in mortgage lending. A day which will see reduced to cold facts the making of any loan." A day, in other words, which will eliminate the risks that the lenders have taken in the past.

The "long term" activities of the Federal Housing Administration to which Mr. Moffett referred, relate to the refinancing and insuring of "economic" mortgages. We have seen, that in case of defaulted (unprofitable) mortgages, the New Deal unhesitatingly took them off the hands of the lending institutions through the Home Owners' Loan Corporation. But when it comes to "economic" (profitable) mortgages, the Roosevelt Administration leaves the field to the banks. Accordingly, the F. H. A., unlike the H. O. L. C., does not deal directly with the individual homeowner or home-builder. On the contrary, it is one of the 4,000 or more private financial institutions, now approved as members of the Administration, which do the lending and make the profit. The F. H. A. serves merely to put the "economic" stamp on the scheme by guarantying its member banks and mortgage companies against loss.

After all, with so much "liquid" capital on their hands, the administration very considerately wishes to give the banks an opportunity to invest it in an "economic" manner and without the "guesswork" which Professor Fisher explained would be eliminated by the government surveys.

Another function of the Federal Housing Administration is to provide "insurance for loans up to $10,000,000 each to private, limited dividends corporations planning low-rent housing projects." Just what kind of housing is possible under the F. H. A. "economic" scheme is indicated by an account of the first project to be so financed. It is a development involving 276 dwelling units in a suburb of Washington, D. C. The apartments will be very fine but the "rentals are expected to range from $37.50 to $62.50 per month." If any new housing is actually constructed in the next year or two, and in a very small way this is conceivable, such housing will undoubtedly be of this kind. Will the relief worker earning $50 a month be able to afford this housing?

John T. Flynn, Washington financial commentator, observes that "the F. H. A. is getting around to one of the plans for which, I suspect, it was founded. Apparently it is getting ready to aid in the bailing out of our defunct title and mortgage companies." *Getting ready?* The fact of the matter is that every one of the New Deal housing efforts that was serious and properly implemented has been, right from the start, in the direction of providing aid to the "defunct title and mortgage companions," the banks and the others.

THE real purpose of the two arms of Roosevelt's program becomes even more clear in the light of inflation. During an inflationary period, the value of the dollar goes down—as it already has to a considerable extent. At such a time it is of course preferable to owe money because it becomes progressively easier to pay off debts. Conversely, it is bad to have money owed one, especially by a defaulting home-owner. This is precisely where the H. O. L. C. and the other New Deal agencies were very useful to the bankers in relieving them of speculatively acquired "frozen" assets to the extent of perhaps ten billion dollars all told. And with their profits saved and their money free, what shall the bankers do? Why, immediately go into the debt of the United States government, of course, and pay up with cheap dollars later.

"Mortgages will be easy to pay off during inflation," Milan V. Ayres, Chicago economist and advisor to the National Association of Real Estate Boards said recently, "and the further the inflation has gone, the easier it will be. Thus it will be profitable for the owner of real estate to put the largest possible mortgage on it before the beginning of inflation. Then he should pay it off when he thinks the dollar has gone as low in value as it is likely to go."

> The opportunity to cash in on inflation is of course not open to the distressed home owner. His income, even in ordinary times, is barely adequate to meet the taxes and mortgage interest. At the beginning of rapid inflation of values, with wages lagging behind, the average worker-homeowner would find his income completely inadequate to meet charges and, in most cases, would be forced to give up his property to the mortgagee who would then make the profit on the rise in dollar values.

NOW the whole, colossal swindle stands revealed. The New Deal did not carry out its housing and slum clearance promises because it did not make them in good faith. But where it really wanted to, it was able to effect a highly successful program. By guarantying this huge amount of worthless mortgage paper, the Administration is paving the way to inflation. At the same time, it is providing the banks and mortgage companies with every opportunity for taking advantage of the anticipated rise in real estate values. The idea is that through the National Mortgage Associations of the F. H. A. and the R. F. C., existing property and new construction will be speculatively financed with government insured mortgages. And then, when the inflation reaches its peak, the "money changers," against whom the President occasionally rails, will pay off these mortgages with cheap dollars, and the government will be left holding the bag. But that is another way of saying that the cost of this swindle will eventually be borne by the workers of the country, who in the long run will have to pay even more than the New Deal has already cost them, for this staggering subsidy to the banks. *The important thing to realize, as far as housing is concerned, is that the U. S. Government is today the largest real-estate interest in the country. Consequently, it is even less likely that it will be willing to compete with itself and upset the realty market through clearing the slums and building low-rental housing in the near future.*

All this complex maneuvering, however, will not affect the fundamental causes of the present crisis. The banks and their agents in the government have temporarily succeeded in propping up a mortally sick credit structure. But essentially the process is merely a book-keeping transaction. For the bonds, by means of which the government financed the lending institutions out of their predicament, had to be purchased by the very same institutions.

And so, just at the present time, we have the interesting spectacle of the banks on the one hand complaining that the government is dangerously overloading them with government securities and, on the other hand, demanding and getting financial assistance which the government can extend only by virtue of selling its securities to the banks. The result is a sort of wild, jittery scramble in which both ends are played against the middle and where the object is to get out from under before the whole crazy business cracks up.

IF, DESPITE what has already been said in this article, there are any readers who somehow still have faith in Roosevelt's plans for the "forgotten man," let them consider whom the President has chosen to head the two arms of his housing program. On the "left" we have Harold L. Ickes, "brain-truster" and liberal, who relieves the tedium of his job by debates with the editors of The New Republic. But on the "right" we see John H. Fahey, prominent business man, financier and war-time president of the U. S. Chamber of Commerce; James A. Moffett, an equally "big business" man and former vice-president of the Standard Oil Company; and Jesse Jones of the R. F. C. about whom the Architectural Forum for March, 1935, says, "As Houston's biggest property owner and one of the heavy investors in New York real estate, Jones well knows the need of putting the mortgage market back on its feet."

Our analysis of the two arms of Roosevelt's "housing" program proves that capitalism will not and indeed cannot plan for the social good of the workers of the country. It is obvious that slums will not be demolished nor workers adequately housed by any schemes of the New Deal. It is equally obvious that, in a limited sense, capitalism can plan—for its own benefit and profit. But whether this type of "planning" can be successful in the long run is quite another question.

The answer to this question is hastened by the rising protest of the millions of dispossessed and insecure workers who are beginning to see that only a Workers' State will do the planning for the social welfare of all.

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The Frameup in Gallup

A. L. WIRIN

(The writer, a Civil Liberties Union attorney, is now taking part in the attempt to force an investigation of the kidnaping of Robert Minor and David Levinson.)

SANTA FE, N. M.

TEN GALLUP miners still face death sentences as the result of the fatal shooting of Sheriff N. R. Carmichael and two workers in Gallup last April 4. That they must await trial by jury on charges of first degree murder, is the decision of District Judge M. A. Otero, Jr. after hearing the state's evidence against them and thirty-eight other miners and their wives, in the course of preliminary hearings just held before him at Santa Fe, New Mexico. In addition to these charges, they and four others—three of them women—will be tried for aiding a prisoner to escape from the custody of officers of the law. Four of them will be imprisoned in the state penitentiary without bond until the trial; six may have their liberty until then if their friends can raise $7,500 bail for each of them; while bail for the remaining four is $500. All charges against all other workers (except deportation proceedings) have now been dismissed.

Thus far every step in the "Gallup Cases" has in each instance set a new landmark in official lawlessness and terror. There have been more "arrests" than in any case in recent American history. The District Attorney admits 601 were "questioned" by him and the 200 specially-deputized Legionnaires and mine employees ("gun-thugs" the workers call them). Two hundred men, women and children were formally arrested; about seventy-five were actually charged with first degree murder; forty-eight were on trial at the preliminary hearings just concluded.

More homes have been raided, searched, and ransacked than in many years—and this includes the San Francisco and Pacific Coast terror following the General Strike. Fifty homes were raided under search warrants; at least fifty more without benefit of any such pretense.

And now ten workers await trial for their lives. This number is larger than those finally tried in any labor case in the United States in recent times—including the Mooney, Gastonia and Haymarket cases.

I shall consider here the state's testimony presented at the preliminary hearing, and the defense evidence as disclosed to me. Let us take the state's case first.

Shortly after nine in the morning on the fourth day of April a group of workers began to gather in front of the court room of W. M. Bickel, Gallup's Justice of the Peace. At nine that morning Exiquel Navarro, militant labor leader, was scheduled to have a trial on charges of re-entering upon property after eviction. (The charges were filed by State Senator C. F. Vogel, New Mexico's racketeer politician, acting either for himself or for the Gallup American Coal Co.—the record is not clear for whom.) Members of the gathering crowd sought to enter the court room to attend the trial. (Both the Constitution of the United States and of New Mexico expressly guarantee a "public" trial.) With the exception of one member of the crowd who persuaded the officers standing guard at the door that he was a witness in the case, no one was allowed to get in. On the witness stand Judge Bickel testified that this was pure accident; that he gave no orders that anyone be kept out. Sheriff D. W. Roberts testified that Judge Bickel had ordered him not to allow anyone in. Except this witness, no one did get in.

Suddenly the crowd, now anxious, suspicious and indignant, saw their comrade taken by the officers to the rear exit; the crowd rushed into the alley in the rear of Judge Bickel's courtroom.

Sheriff Roberts, the state's "star-witness," from the witness stand told a story of as clear-thinking, straight-shooting, heroic a western sheriff as any wild west movie thriller ever portrayed—he was talking of himself.

He and Sheriff Carmichael with Navarro, the prisoner between them, stepped into the alley. Other deputy sheriffs were behind them and to their left; the crowd was in front of them, forming a semi-circle around the rear exit. They "worked their way" through the crowd, turned east and walked forty or fifty feet. Then he heard two shots fired, and Sheriff Carmichael fell into his arms—mortally wounded. Instantly he turned west; he saw Ignacio Velarde about fifteen or twenty feet away aiming at him; further to the right (west) and down the alley he saw Solomon Esquibel also aiming at him. He pulled his gun; shot at Velarde. Velarde fell dead; then he shot at Esquibel—at the first shot he went down on his hands and knees, and immediately got up; Roberts fired again—this time Esquibel didn't get up. Altogether fifteen or twenty shots were fired.

Velarde and Esquibel had shot and killed Sheriff Carmichael; he shot and killed them both, Roberts concluded.

Dr. B. L. Travers who removed one bullet lodged in Sheriff Carmichael's body testified that it entered under the *left* arm, traveled in an oblique direction *upward;* that another entered the *left* side of the neck; the bullet removed had a .45 calibre steel jacket.

What do the workers say? They assert not only the innocence of their living comrades, but also of their dead ones—Velarde and Esquibel, for whose deaths no one has yet been prosecuted, or arrested.

In the first place they say they went to Judge Bickel's court for the sole purpose of attending a public hearing of their comrade and leader. Had they intended to rescue him from the clutches of the law, they would have arrived *before,* not *after,* nine o'clock—the time set for the trial. The time they would have sought to effect the rescue was when Navarro was being taken *to* Judge Bickel's court; or certainly when the officers first appeared with their prisoner in the alley, and most certainly *not* when the Sheriff was forty or fifty feet away from the crowd, after having gone through it.

More than that, the workers assert they were not armed; that no weapons were found upon the defendants nor upon any of the hundreds arrested; that although both Velarde and Esquibel fell helpless and lifeless in the alley no gun was found upon either of them or anywhere near them (and, as the lawyers say, "or at all").

They conclude with the charge that the Sheriff was shot *by his own deputies.* The deputies were to the *left* of the Sheriff; the crowd, Velarde and Esquibel to the *right.* The bullets that killed Sheriff Carmichael came from the *left.* And all of the sheriffs carried .45 calibre pistols.

In any event, upon Roberts' own testimony, those who killed Sheriff Carmichael are now dead. But under an old New Mexico territorial statute never before used, all persons present when a peace officer is killed are equally guilty, whether or not they actively participated in the death.

Sheriff Roberts further testified that the fact that the ten miners held for trial were always "in the front rank" of labor and unemployed activities in Gallup, and the additional fact that he considered their activities harmful, was a pure coincidence in so far as their arrest and prosecution is concerned.

The workers say the prosecution is directed to persecute their leaders, to crush and smash their militant labor organizations.

At the preliminary hearing, as counsel for the workers, I charged: "I do not say that the Attorney General of the State of New Mexico and the District Attorney are in the actual pay of the Gallup American Coal Co. I do say that they should be, for they are serving well the interests of the mining corporations of Gallup who will stop at nothing to destroy the workers' organizations in order to continue their exploitation."

The forthcoming trial in June will disclose whether the charges of the prosecution, or of the workers, are true.

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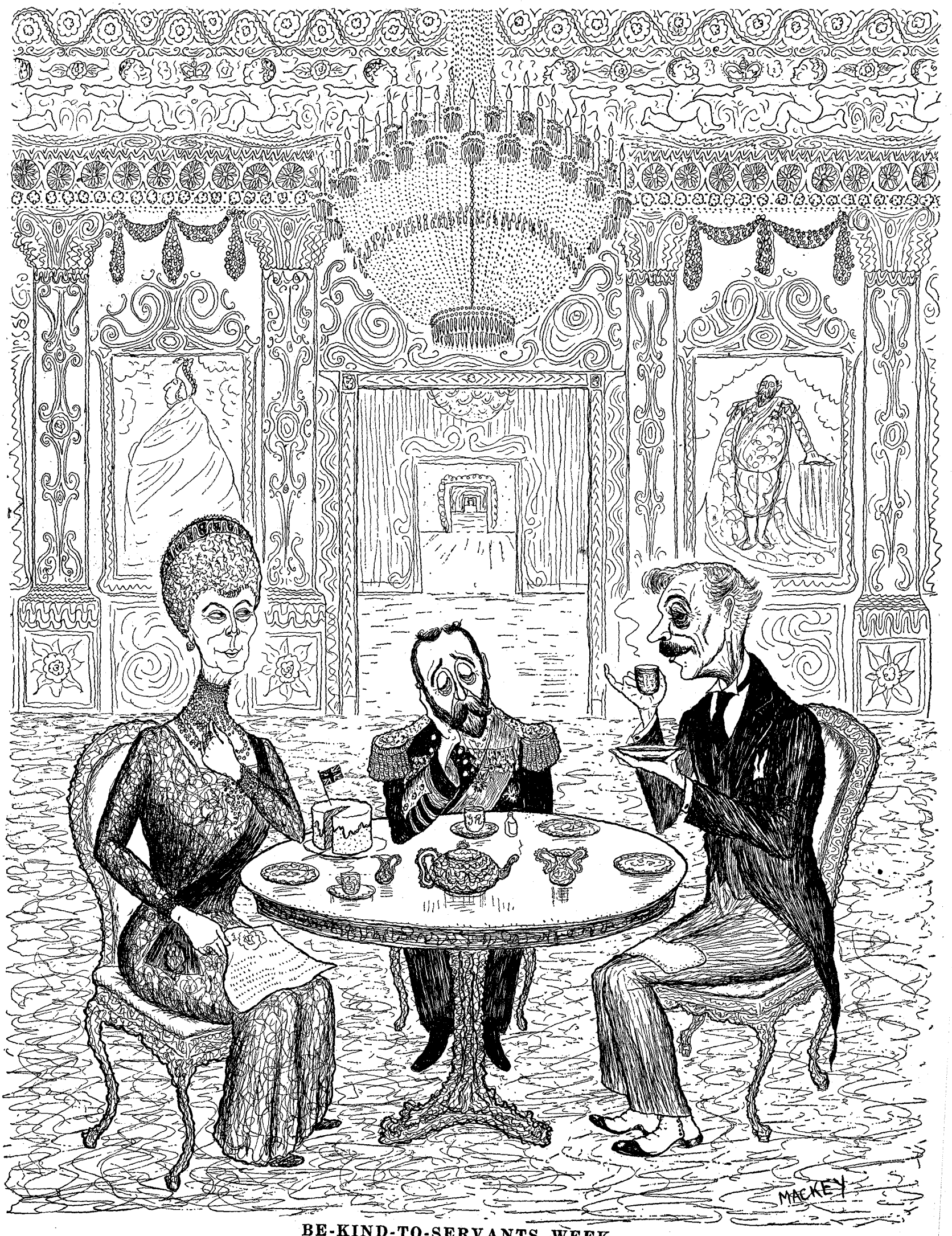

BE-KIND-TO-SERVANTS WEEK

Mackey

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Prisoners of the Class War

Torture in Spain

To The New Masses:

A NEW and more terrible Inquisition today grips Spain—an Inquisition against the Workers.

More than 7,000 workers have been massacred, it has been estimated by the Spanish Committee of Action. Some 60,000 are in prisons which are little better than torture chambers. Virtually no food or water is supplied. Many prisoners are chained to the walls. Invariably the prisons are so crowded it is impossible for anyone to lie down on the rat-infested floors. The more militant workers are thrown in pitch-black subterranean chambers and left to die. In the horrible Oviedo prison are 2,000 workers who have been so tortured and maimed that, even if their release were obtained, they would never be able to work again, would never be able to return to normal life. At the Burgos prison conditions are equally terrible: boiling water poured on the backs of stripped prisoners, others compelled to sleep on the ground with the temperature fourteen degrees below zero. Astorga: prisoners beaten with rifle butts and forced to whip each other.

Looted despite government promises to the contrary, Asturias is today a living hell. The surviving wives and children of the militant Asturias workers who defended their little Spanish Soviet to the last, live in pillaged wreckage with little or no food, slowly starving to death. A reign of terror continues to envelope the community. The families of militant Asturians are subjected to constant cruelty

Professional workers of liberal outlook, particularly teachers, are under a reign of repression. Many teachers have been summarily executed; death today awaits 150 condemned teachers; ninety are awaiting sentence.

Despite this new inquisition of the workers and the fascist reign of terror over Spain, workers, magnificently united, continue their struggles. Strikes, hunger marches, organized resistance, peasant demonstrations—these continue in the face of fascist reaction.

This was the grim but inspiring picture of the Spanish struggle against fascism which was drawn at the recent (April 13 and 14) European Relief Conference for Spain held in Paris—a conference which pledged international solidarity with the workers of Spain. Organized by the Friends of Spain, the Peoples Relief Committee for the Victims of Spanish Fascism and the World Committee Against War and Fascism, the conference reflected all political points of view united in a common struggle. Some 207 delegates came from seventeen countries; of these delegates seventy-nine were affiliated with no party; seventy-eight were Communists; thirty-four were Socialists and sixteen were members of left bourgeois parties. Many came at the risk of their lives, particularly the thirty-three delegates from Spain who stole across the Spanish border with soldiers at their heels. The following delegates came illegally from other fascist countries: Germany six, Austria six, Bulgaria six, Jugoslavia six, Greece three, Italy fourteen, Rumania three.

The delegates included industrial workers, peasants, liberal bourgeois authors, professors, even government officials. Professor Wallon, typical of academicians only in appearance, presided. The speakers included Elie Faure, French author; Margarita Nelken, Socialist deputy in the Spanish Cortes; Alvarez del Vayo, executive member of the Second International, President of the League of Nations Chaco Commission and Socialist deputy in the Spanish Cortes; Maitre Serveze, famous French barrister; Lord Listowel, member of the British House of Lords and M. Cudenet, president of the French Radical Socialist Party.

It remained, however, for a simple Spanish miner's wife—"Passionaria" as she is called by the workers of Spain—to stir the meetings to its depth. Passionate in her hatred of fascism, passionate in her love for the workers, this symbol of revolutionary Spain kept the delegates hypnotized with her account of conditions in Spain and with her plea for international solidarity against fascism wherever it appears. The conference gave her its pledge of solidarity, proclaiming its "entire solidarity with the Spanish workers who have shown to the world that only mass struggle can triumph over fascism."

M. B. Schnapper.

McNamara—California

To The New Masses:

I HOPE every reader of The New Masses saw the splendid appeal made by Nora Conklin on behalf of James B. McNamara, Tom Mooney, John Cornelison and Matthew Schmidt, in the issue of May 7, and resolved to swell the flood of protests against this fascist treatment of our comrades in San Quentin.

The danger which threatens J. B. McNamara must not be minimized and only the workers can save him. June 2 is his birthday, the twenty-fourth he has celebrated behind prison walls. Let this be the day on which your letter of greeting falls into the hands of J. B. and your protest lands on the desk of Warden Holohan. Let Warden Holohan once realize that J. B. McNamara has friends—the aroused working class of America—and he will see to it that no harm befalls James B. McNamara.

Every worker should rally to the defense of the man who has served a longer term than any other political prisoner in the entire world; the man who, in all these years, has never asked anything for himself; whose every thought is for that better world to be built by the workers. William Z. Foster once said of him: "Such a brave fighter is an inspiration and honor to the working class." Suppose we let him know on June 2, by letters, gifts and telegrams, how many of us love and honor this grand fighter of and for the working class of the world, whom the Holohans of capitalism can never break!

Hilda S. Jardan.

The Rueggs—China

To The New Masses:

PAUL RUEGG, secretary of the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat, together with his wife Gertrude, has been in prison for nearly three years on a charge of having carried on Communist activities in China. The farcical trial which ended in their death sentence and then commutation to life imprisonment, is well known to thousands who followed it. The "trial" violated every legal statute of the Nanking government itself under whose authority it was held. However, what immediately concerns us, and should concern advanced opinion throughout the world, is the fact that Paul Ruegg is lying dangerously ill in the Central Hospital in Nanking, suffering from a severe case of typhus contracted in the First Kiangsu Prison where he and Gertrude Reugg are prisoners.

Ruegg not only contracted typhus, but lay in prison for nine days without medical aid, denied the right to hospital treatment. He was removed to the hospital only when the disease was approaching its most critical stage and only after the International Defence Committee had been accidently informed of Ruegg's condition.

If Paul Ruegg contracted typhus in the so-called "model prison" in Nanking, it means that many other prisoners have also contracted the disease which, in the vast majority of cases, is fatal. The others, however, are Chinese, among them large numbers of political prisoners. No information concerning their sufferings or the conditions under which they spend their miserable existence is allowed to reach the outside world.

For Chinese prisoners there is not the slightest care. Not only in this so-called "model prison," but in all the other prisons in which tens of thousands of Chinese political prisoners—men, women and often youths little more than children—conditions are barbarous. The prisoners are nearly always in chains, jammed into dark, filthy prison cells, five and six times the number of prisoners to the space allotted. Often they have no bedding, their clothing is changed only when it

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falls from their backs, vermin make their lives a hell, they do not receive boiled drinking water until guards or officials are bribed, and they are given only the most filthy and inadequate food. The death rate in prison is not known, because the officials refuse neutrally-constituted bodies the right to make investigations.

Numerous letters smuggled from prisons have revealed the feudal, barbarous torture of political prisons. The prisoners die like flies, and in most cases the chains are removed from them only after their bodies are cold and stiff in death. Often they are left to die in the prison cell in full view of other prisoners, at other times they are merely removed to the corridor until they stiffen in death. When epidemics, such as typhus, typhoid, dysentery or cholera break out among them, there is no earthly possibility of the victims receiving proper treatment. Only an aroused international public opinion wrung the right to hospital treatment for Paul Ruegg.

The public should remember that imprisonment in China nearly always means death after a few months or years. Few human beings can endure the unspeakable conditions of Kuomintang prisons. Let the whole world know that Chinese political prisoners, like those that once filled the prisons of Czarist Russia, are men and women whose "crime" is that of struggling for a new and free society. Thousands of the most intelligent and courageous men and women of China have either been tortured to death, shot, beheaded, strangled to death for their national-revolutionary activities, or are sitting in the disease-infested dungeons of the Kuomintang.

We call upon advanced men and women of all lands to raise their voices in mighty protest, demanding the release of Paul and Gertrude Ruegg as well as the release of all Chinese political prisoners suffering and dying in silence. MME. SUN YAT-SEN.

Fraternity Minus the Bunk

BRUCE MINTON

AN HOUR before the workers of San Francisco buried their dead last July, an hour before that unending, silent column of mourners followed the coffins of two pickets who had been shot in the back by police, another group marched. A few hundred tired old men paraded. They strutted in cocked hats adorned with flowing plumes; they trudged up Market Street with their silly tin swords jangling at their sides, or rode decrepit nags hired for the occasion. These old men were delegates to the Knights Templars' Convention. No one paid much attention to them—least of all the thousands upon thousands of workers who had gathered on the waterfront to bury their dead.

The Knights Templars resented the strike. It inconvenienced them, particularly when the taxis and street cars stopped running, when no one paid the slightest attention to their jinks. Their fraternal order opposed the strike. So did officials of the Masons and the Elks and the Eagles. The membership in these organizations is composed largely of industrial or white-collar workers, but the policies that the orders pursue remain anti-labor. Support may come from dues paid into the treasuries by workers and clerks; but the policies are directed from above, designed to serve a system based on private profit, in which the interests of the majority are opposed to those of the ruling class.

Last week, another fraternal order held its convention, this time in New York. A special train from Chicago, another from Cleveland, brought delegates; more than 1,100 in all, from all parts of the country, from labor unions of all kinds, from nearly every trade and profession—printers, machinists, steel and auto workers, writers, dentists, pharmacists, blacksmiths and many others. At the opening session Madison Square Garden was jammed with delegates and spectators.

The members of the International Workers' Order didn't have gold-mounted ivory elks' teeth dangling from watch chains, or wear cocked hats with plumes or the Turkish fez or fancy costumes. They were workers, and their order had more serious business than to turn out for a junket ending in a glorified drunk. The I. W. O. is the only genuinely working-class fraternal order in the country. Five years old, it has grown in this brief time from 6,000 members (who broke away from the reactionary, social-democratic Workmen's Circle) to 72,500 members subdivided into language groups and a Youth Section. The original Jewish nucleus that quit the Circle has in five years become but another unit in the various sections composing the I. W. O. Now there are Italian, Polish, Hungarian, Jugoslavian groups, etc., including an English and a Youth Section.

This rapid growth can be readily understood upon a brief examination of what the I. W. O. offers. In the first place, rates are far lower than in any other fraternal order. There are no high-paid officials to support, no Senators and ex-Cabinet members such as Senator James Davis of Pennsylvania, once Secretary of Labor, who found his executive position in a bourgeois fraternal order enormously lucrative. Besides, members receive more insurance, more benefits in the I. W. O. for the amount paid than they could possibly get in any other order. For example, 99 cents a month entitles a thirty-year-old man to a $1,000 life-insurance policy, plus a $4 weekly sick benefit, a $20 weekly tuberculosis benefit over a period of twenty-six weeks, and a disability (accident) benefit graduated, according to the gravity of the accident, up to $300. A small additional sum means an increase in the amount payable in case of illness, doctor's services free not only to the member but to his or her family. Specialists, X-ray treatment, even medicine, can be obtained at reduced cost. Insurance for a child under nine costs 12 cents; under sixteen, 16 cents—in which is included a copy of the monthly, anti-fascist magazine, New Pioneer. These rates are about a third of those charged by commercial insurance companies.

Foreign born were first to enter the I. W. O. in any numbers. These workers had the most difficult time obtaining employment; they worked under the worst conditions, drifting in and out of mining and steel towns, into the sweat shops of the crowded cities. They lacked any form of security. They could not join the bourgeois orders: they were foreigners, they were unable to pay high dues; if they did join, they remained outsiders. Yet they had a strong fraternal tradition. The I. W. O. solved their problem—they became members by the thousands.

American workers have also been joining. The Convention just held was especially concerned with enrolling Americans. To this end, the federated set-up of language groups which prevailed in the I. W. O. to the present time has been altered: henceforth, the English section will predominate, the language sections will form auxiliaries. The convention also stressed the activities of the I. W. O. above and beyond the fraternal benefits. Unemployment, industrial disease, death on the job, accident and disability are products of the present system which underpays workers, speeds up the tempo that they must maintain on the job until exhaustion and carelessness are the natural result. Benefits partially provide for the emergency needs of the workers; but it is also important to see that the causes of these needs are reduced. The usual fraternal order elaborately avoids such problems, spending its time parading on holidays, solemnly going through mumbo-jumbo rites, listening to patriotic declamations, or serving the Chambers of Commerce by passing anti-radical resolutions (aimed at the organized labor movement). The I. W. O., on the other hand, fights vigorously on a class-conscious basis for the Workers' Unemployment Insurance Bill (H. R. 2827), against deportations, against war and fascism.

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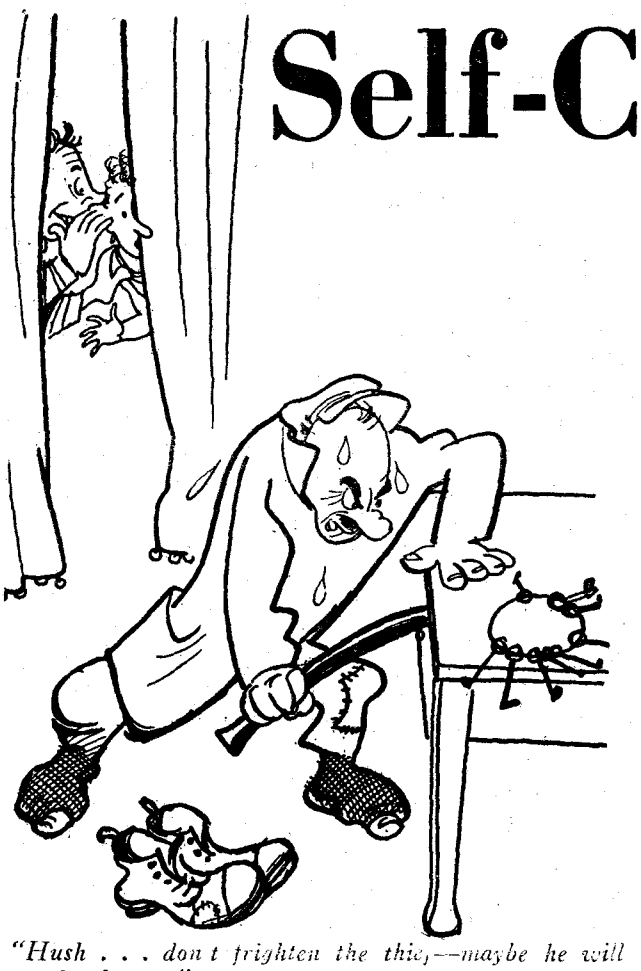
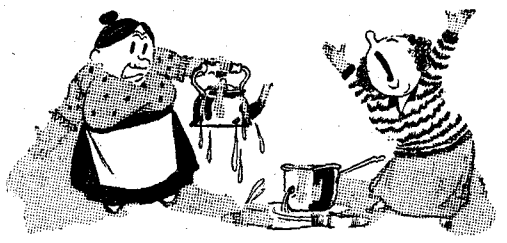
"Daddy, have you brought me some pastry?"
"How do you know?"
"I can smell the kerosene."

Self-Cri

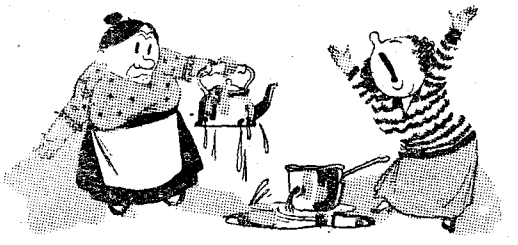


"Hush . . . don t frighten the thief—maybe he will open the drawer."

THE PHILOSOPHER WAS RIGHT



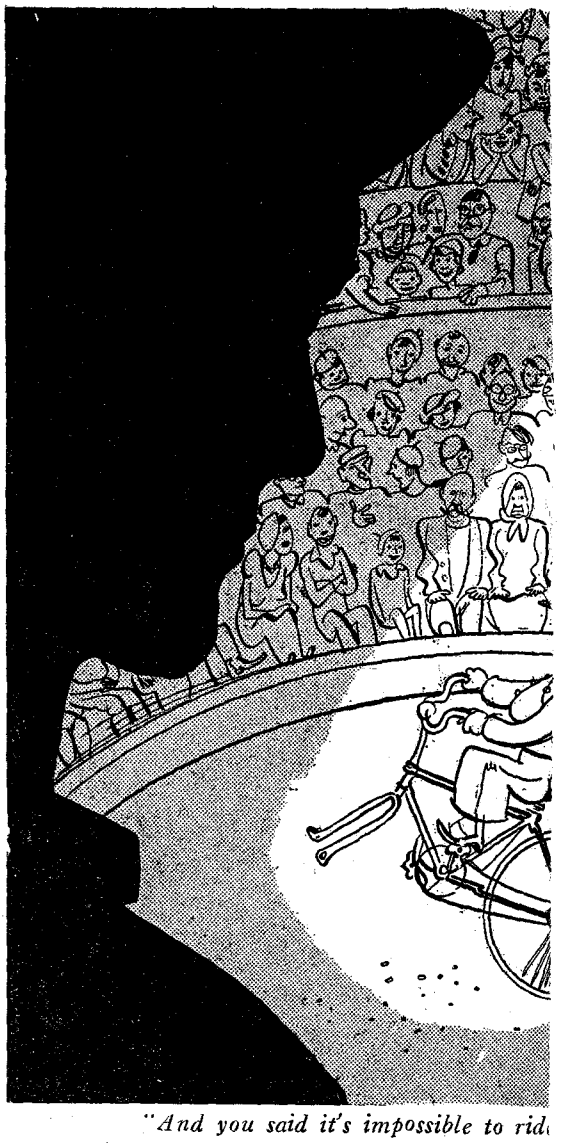
a. Everything Flows



c. Again Everything Flows

b. Everything Is Being Changed

d. Again Everything Is Being Changed



"And you said it's impossible to rid

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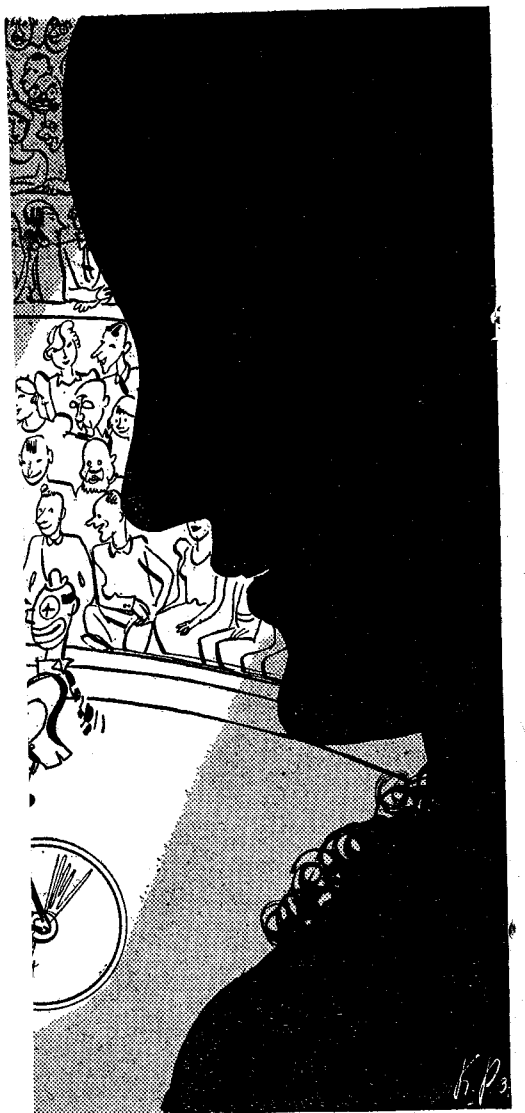
iticism in Soviet Cartoons

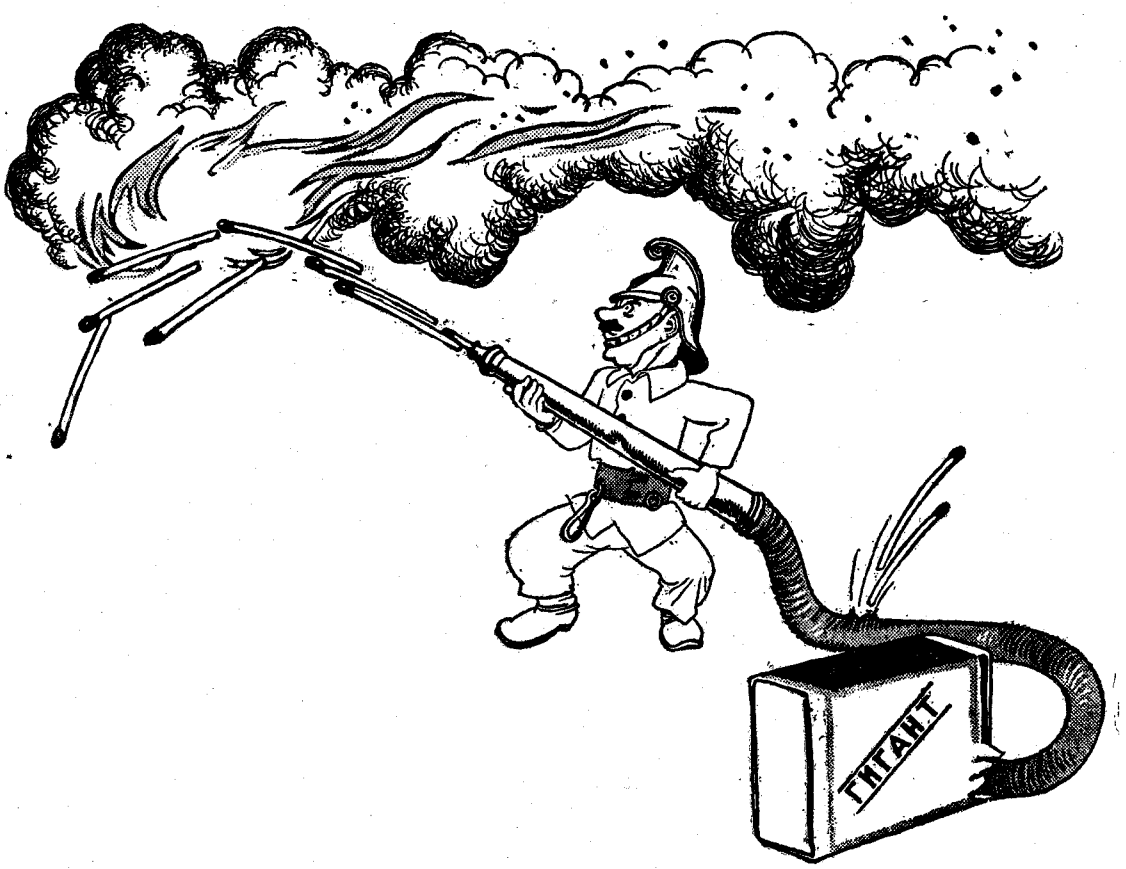
IN HIS recent speech before the graduating class of the Military Academy in Moscow, Joseph Stalin said: "Now everybody admits that we possess a powerful, first-class industry, a powerful and mechanized agriculture, a developing and rising transport, an organized and excellently equipped Red Army. This means that in the main we have already done away with the period of hunger in the field of technique. . . ."

However, Stalin did not confine himself to self-congratulation. He pointed out weaknesses and flaws: "But having done away with the period of hunger in technique, we have entered a new period—a period, I could say, of hunger for a personnel capable of harnessing this technique and moving it forward. . . . Should our first-class plants and factories, our state and collective farms and our Red Army have a sufficient personnel capable of harnessing this technique, our country would obtain three-fold and four-fold results compared to what it has obtained up to now."

It has been universally acknowledged that one of the most effective weapons in the Soviet's struggle for satisfying its "hunger" for technique and adequate personnel has always been vigilant, ruthless Bolshevik self-criticism. In this the Soviet cartoonists have played a magnificent part—satirizing weaknesses, criticizing failures, savagely attacking and exposing laxity, bureaucracy, inefficiency and irresponsibility. The cartoons in these pages have been taken from Crocodile, the famous satirical journal of Soviet Russia.



. . . the Penza bicycle. Just look at him."



FROM THE ARCHIVES OF UNUSED PROJECTS

Method of putting out small fires, suggested by the artist K. Ratov. The matches of the factory "Giant" are most appropriate for the purpose—they won't ignite under any circumstances.

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What Is Communism?

3. Who Will Lead the Revolution?

EARL BROWDER

MANY readers of THE NEW MASSES find it difficult to understand the nature of a class in society, the role of the different classes, their relations to one another and to the problem of building a new socialist society. We take a typical expression of these questions. A sympathetic engineer writes:

> I agree to a great extent with your criticism of the present system and with your ideas about what a socialist society would be like. But I can't agree with your idealization of the workers, nor with your dogmatic insistence upon forcing ignorant working-class leadership upon the intelligent, skilled, trained middle class. The only possibility of achieving the new society, in my opinion, is under the leadership of the engineers and technicians. What possible reasonable arguments can you advance for your position and against the leadership of the most skilled and intelligent part of the population?

The answers to these questions involve the whole problem of the class structure of society. Our questioner will not be able to understand the Communist position so long as he keeps closely before his eyes, obscuring all larger questions, the individual technician and his capacities in his own field, in comparison with the individual worker and his general lack of technical training outside of his specialized job. It is necessary to see *the classes as a whole* and their function in society in order to be able later to judge *the individual in relation to his class.*

What is this class structure of society?

The most important class in America from the point of view of power is the capitalist class. This comprises all those who function through ownership of means of production which are operated by wage labor. Within this class, however, all real power rests in the hands of a very small nucleus of the largest capitalists (monopoly or financial capitalists) who through their gigantic personal fortunes and through the pyramiding of corporation control by interlocking directorates, etc., effectively hold a mastery over 80 to 90 percent of all the means of production. The essential mastery of the country rests in the hands of somewhere between five hundred and six hundred of the richest families in the country.

At the other end of the social scale is the working class. This comprises all those who depend for their daily livelihood upon working for wages, usually by the day or by the week. The working class is the largest single group in the population in every industrial country, and in the United States constitutes an absolute majority. As distinct from the capitalist class it owns no property of any kind, aside from meager collections of household goods and in some exceptional cases, the ownership of homes.

This general characterization is not in any appreciable degree modified by the existence of the pre-crisis practice of corporations forcing their employes to purchase stock on the installment plan or by savings accounts, insurance, etc. All these forms of property holding among the working class will not in their aggregate mean more than the accumulation of a few weeks' wages for the working class as a whole. Most of such savings that existed before the crisis have been swallowed up since 1929 by unemployment. For all practical purposes the working class is propertyless. That is the meaning of the scientific term "proletariat," the class of propertyless wage workers.

Like the capitalist class, certain sections of the working class occupy a more strategic position than others in relation to the economic system and to the class struggle. These more important groups within the working class are the workers in basic industry and in large scale mass production, such as steel and iron, coal, automobiles, heavy machine manufacturing, etc. We will discuss later the characteristics of these groups arising out of their position in the productive process that gives them an especially important role.

In between these two basic classes, the small capitalist ruling class at the top owning most of the productive forces of the country, and the propertyless wage workers at the bottom, there are a series of intermediate groups known collectively in popular language as the middle class—although it is not a homogenous class but rather a series of class groups covering a wide range in economic status and function. In its upper layers the middle class merges with the capitalists; its lower ranks are constantly being thrown into the working class.

The most important and numerically largest group are the farmers. The farmers, taken as a whole, cannot be considered a homogenous class such as the working class. They are subdivided into at least three main strata. First, there are the rich and well-to-do farmers, the upper circles of which merge directly with the capitalist class, being essentially operating capitalists working entirely with the labor of wage workers upon a highly mechanized basis, with the type of farming that could be called agrarian factory production. The lower limits of this group of rich farmers are reached with those who still work their own farms, but with hired labor performing the major part of the work. This entire stratum of farmers is essentially capitalistic in its whole make-up and outlook. It is bound by a thousand ties with the existing system and with monopoly capital. As a whole it can never operate independently but only as an auxiliary to the big capitalists.

The middle stratum of farmers comprises all the independent producers below the rich farmer class who, operating mainly through their own labor and that of their families, are still able to maintain their farms and a certain minimum standard of economic and social life.

At the bottom of the farming population are the poor farmers, comprising the largest part of the tenant and mortgaged farmers, practically the entire body of share-croppers, and, especially in the last years, including a large section of the former middle farmers who have been impoverished by the crisis.

As the interests of the rich farmers determine their allegiance to capitalism, so the interests of the poor farmers propels them in the opposite direction, against the capitalists and towards alliance with the working class. The middle farmers vacillate between these two basic class forces. At certain times and on certain issues they go with the rich farmers and the capitalists. At other times with the poor farmers and the workers.

THE city middle classes are composed of a kaleidoscopic maze of shopkeepers, lawyers, doctors, preachers, writers, journalists, hired executives, office functionaries, artists, teachers, technicians, engineers etc. Their economic status ranges all the way from that of the high-paid technician and the doctors who attend the neurotic wives of the rich, down to the status of the lowest ranks of the so-called "free" professions, which is even lower economically than that of the employed semi-skilled worker.

The outstanding characteristic of the city middle class as a whole is its heterogeneity. Its groups have no common social or economic function, or common economic status. It lacks any basis for the building of middle class solidarity, common policies or common action.

Examining this set-up of class groupings with their varying characteristics, it should not be difficult very quickly to estimate the position of each toward the main questions of the class struggle, toward the proposal of abolishing the capitalist system and setting up a socialist society. It is clear that the capitalists as a whole, with those sections of the middle class most closely allied to it and with the greatest stake in the existing system, will fight to the death against a new system which would deprive them of all their special privileges. It is equally clear that the work-

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ers, and first of all the workers in basic and large-scale industry, have the least to lose in the present system and the most to gain from a socialist society. The lower middle classes, more susceptible to capitalist influence than the workers, are yet on the whole more and more driven to align themselves with the workers in the fight against monopoly capital which is continually driving down their standards of life. Large sections of the middle classes inevitably are unable to follow any clear and consistent course but must hesitate and vacillate between the two main class forces.

How utopian it is, therefore, to expect leadership from any of these middle class groupings in the struggle for a socialist society. Let us examine in more detail, for example, that group nominated for the leading post by our correspondent whom we quoted above, namely, the engineers and technicians. The idea of the engineer as the leader of the movement for a new society was first clearly formulated by Thorstein Veblen, before the World War. But even at that time, Thorstein Veblen himself realized the impossibility of expecting the engineers as a group to play such a role and the impossibility of their independent functioning. His projected "Soviet of Engineers" as he put it after the 1917 Revolution in Russia, was a combination of the most advanced technicians with the main body of the working class. Unrealistic as Veblen's dream was, he should by no means be saddled with responsibility for the recurrent vulgarization of his suggestions that are propagated by the technocrats and which have undoubtedly influenced our questioner as well as considerable sections of the middle class.

The engineers and technicians are themselves a most heterogeneous group. Before the crisis a considerable and dominating number were well-paid and satisfied servants of capitalism, while the lower ranks were filled with ambitions and hopes of climbing into the more favored positions. Since 1929 the overwhelming majority of them have been discarded by capitalism as useless forces. Most of them are impoverished and a not inconsiderable number are on the breadlines. Others have become taxi-drivers, doormen at night clubs and hotels, waiters, etc., displacing former workers in these positions and throwing them into the ranks of the unemployed. The largest part of them are subsisting on relief or working in the apparatus of relief administration or on "made" work of the P.W.A., etc. So far from witnessing any tendency among the most politically advanced and most impoverished of these technicians to come forward in any independent role, we see among them on the contrary the growing recognition that their only future lies in identifying themselves with the working class, subordinating themselves to the working class as the main class force fighting for the new society. The only bid for "independence" of the engineers and technicians is the travesty of "technocracy," which points clearly and unmistakably in the direction of fascism, that is, independence only in name, and in fact complete subservience to the most reactionary section of the capitalist class.

It should be clear to anyone who has followed our analysis of the various classes and their characteristics, and who cannot set up and defend any basically different analysis of the classes, that the statement of our questioner that we are guilty of "dogmatic insistence" upon forcing working class leadership upon the intelligent, skilled, trained middle class is an entirely false statement of the problem. The insistence upon working class leadership in the struggle for socialism does not arise out of any dogma, is not the result of some scheme hatched in the minds of Communist dreamers. On the contrary, it is a necessity which arises out of the very nature of present class society. It is a necessity not merely for the workers, but for all of those who want to bring into action the greatest possible forces to achieve Socialism, to escape from the catastrophes being visited upon them by collapsing capitalism. Working class leadership is not some demand put forward by the workers in their own narrow class interests. It is a basic necessity without which socialism cannot be achieved.

THIS brings us to a letter from another reader who poses the question in a different form and from another angle. He writes:

> It is becoming clear to me that the working class is the main instrument through which socialism will be achieved. But why do you exclude from any significant part in this great historical change all of us middle-class professionals, and condemn us to the role of camp-followers and water-carriers for the working class? Why do you deny the value and significance of individuals from other classes?

This reader, while grasping the basic idea of the role of the working class, has misunderstood the Communist position and interprets it in a narrow, distorted manner. We do not assign to the working class a monopoly of the revolutionary process of carrying through this great social transformation. Our theory of the role of the working class is not that of *monopoly* but of *hegemony* in the revolution. These are two distinct and different conceptions. The idea of hegemony presupposes not the exclusion of other class groupings from the revolution but on the contrary necessitates the active participation of all the exploited and impoverished masses, together with and *under the leadership* of the working class. The first and most important elaboration of the theory of hegemony is the policy of alliance between the working class and the main body of the farmers against capitalism and for the new society. It also presupposes that individuals and groups from all other classes who are able to rise above their narrow class interests and understand the whole historic process, will break with their class, join the revolutionary working class as allies, and even identify themselves and merge with the working class. This will be true even of individuals and groups from among the higher circles of the ruling class. This is not a new idea in the Communist movement. It was first enunciated in 1847 by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in the famous *Communist Manifesto* from which dates the whole history of scientific socialism.

From all this it follows that the Communists do not deny the *value and significance of individuals from other classes.* On the contrary we estimate these very highly. It is true that we do not fall upon the neck of every individual who comes to us from the enemy classes and immediately hand over the leadership of the movement to him. In fact, we are very suspicious of most of these people, because we have found through long experience that the largest part of them come, not through basic understanding, but through temporary and unstable moods and sentimental ideas. Such people have no value or significance, beyond the moment, for the revolutionary movement. What momentary value they may have is usually more than offset by the confusions and dangers which they bring with them. But those individuals who come to the revolutionary movement with the basic understanding of the historic necessity of abolishing capitalism, who are ready to subordinate themselves to, and identify themselves with, the only completely revolutionary class, are able to make serious and lasting contributions to the cause of socialism. In fact, scientific socialism was founded by two such people, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.

Earl Browder's fourth article, next week, will deal with "Wages, Unemployment Insurance and Revolution."—THE EDITORS.

Questions from Readers

ANSWERED BY EARL BROWDER

A Classless Society

Question: Is it true that John Strachey said the Communists believe in classes? Is the classless state the ultimate aim of Communism?

Answer: Without having heard every word Strachey spoke, or read each of his written words, I can still, from my knowledge of his political mind, deny completely that he ever said anything that the question implies. Communists do not "believe in classes"; they believe that classes exist, that the struggle between classes must be fought out to a conclusion, that this conclusion can only be the victory of the working class—*which is the victory* of socialism. This belief is a scientific conclusion, based upon the evidence of history and the Marxian analysis of the existing social and economic system.

No, the "classless state" is not the aim of the Communists, ultimate or otherwise. "Classless state" is a contradiction in terms. The "State" is the

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political organization of society made necessary by the division of society into classes; with the abolition of classes, the State disappears. The ultimate aim of the Communists is to achieve the *classless* and therefore *stateless, society.*

"All Not Born Equal"

Question: That men are not born with equal ability and intelligence is accepted by all. Also, economic inequality is political inequality. How do Communists reconcile these facts with their professed aim of a classless society?

Answer: The form of the question assumes that class division is based upon differences of ability and intelligence among men. The ruling class would like to have us believe this; but such a belief becomes absolutely stupid in these days of the Five-and-Ten Princess Barbara Hutton Mdivani, and the Half-Billion-Dollar-Dollhouse Colleen Moore—not to mention the pages of daily effluvia of the society columns. The class structure of society is designed to *prevent* the superior abilities and intelligence existing among the masses of the exploited from finding their normal expression, development, and resulting influence upon the course of social development. A socialist society will release all these unequal abilities from *class restrictions,* allowing them free development, and providing special opportunities for the specially gifted individuals, entirely upon the basis of merit. The policy of the socialist society would be determined by its fundamental aim to expand its productive forces to the fullest possible extent in the quickest possible time; this means that the most useful and productive individuals would require more scope for their abilities than the less useful and productive. The determination of the relative scale of usefulness and productivity would thus be arrived at in a socially-organized fashion.

Not "Just Another 'ism"

Question: How can we feel certain that Communism will not turn out to be just another of the "isms" which have come and gone in the long range of human history and which, as a rule, have proven either worthless or disappointing to the toilers?

Answer: Workers can make themselves certain that Communism is not "just another 'ism" by learning that Communism does not promise to "bring something to" them, but rather to develop their own power, as an organized class, to win things for themselves. Workers can become even more certain by learning, through experience, that the teachings of Communism enable them to win a better life as the struggle proceeds. They can gain absolute certainty by studying how the Communist Party is now actually building socialism in the Soviet Union, and by understanding the science through which this became possible, the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin.

State Socialism

Question: What is State Socialism? Does State Socialism exist today in the Soviet Union?

Answer: What is usually understood by the term "state socialism" is, in actuality, state capitalism. It is state operation of certain industries (in theory it may be state operation of all major industries), without expropriation of the capitalists, in which capitalist ownership has been changed in form to the ownership of government bonds. No, nothing of the kind exists in the Soviet Union. In the only sense that the Soviet Union could be described as "state socialism," in that it is organized and built under the direction of the Workers' Government, such an application of the term is meaningless, because *all* socialism is "state socialism" in that sense. A "stateless" socialism is already Communism.

Freedom of the Press

Question: How can THE NEW MASSES demand a free press in America when in Russia, our only example of Communism, there is no such thing?

Answer: This apparently simple question is, when analyzed, a whole series of questions. First of all, *for whom* are we demanding freedom of the press? For the workers, for the people who perform the labor of society. And what is the situation of the workers in Russia (it is now the *Soviet Union,* by the way, no longer Russia!) regarding freedom of the press? Why, they have it—a glorious freedom, in which they have multiplied the issue of their press from the few tens of thousands per year of the pre-revolutionary times, to the thirty-seven millions per day of the present! So we see, the moment we ask "freedom for whom?" it becomes clear that we are demanding for American workers a *little bit* of what the Russian workers have gained entirely. So there is no longer any contradiction, at this point. Our questioner may rejoin, then, that in America "free press" is first of all free for the capitalists. We can only reply, that we know that only too well, that this is too bad, that while we do not propose to remedy this at once, we hope to come practically to this problem in due course of time. Our capitalist democracy (more scientifically bourgeois democracy) has justified historically its placing of all power in the hands of a small group of capitalists, by declaring that the masses choose that capitalism shall so rule, by going through democratic forms of obtaining the consent of the masses; in fact, capitalism could never have developed to its present level except by means of this bourgeois democracy. But long ago, just as the individual competing capitalists were replaced by trusts and giant monopolies, so did the boasted freedoms—of the press, speech and assemblage—become more and more curtailed, for the masses. Today, the fight for free press for the workers is seriously, actively, carried on only by those who want to use this freedom to change from capitalism to socialism. It is not THE NEW MASSES, not the Communists, who are open to the charge of hypocrisy, but on the contrary, it is the capitalists (and those who speak for them), who boast of a free press, free speech, free assembly, universal franchise—but only for so long as there is no danger that these things will be used against their class rule. If our questioner has any doubts of this, let him only look at the flood of proposed laws in Washington and all state legislatures (many of them already passed) denying the Communist Party electoral rights, and making crimes punishable by imprisonment up to fourteen years of the most ordinary exercise of those freedoms by anyone who could be suspected of wanting to change the capitalist system.

Washington—Jim-Crow Capital

2. "Friends of the Negro"

MARGUERITE YOUNG

I SPOKE to Eugene Kinckle Jones about the Jim-Crow pattern of Washington. He should know. He is Advisor on Negro Affairs in the Department of Commerce, and was secretary of the influential National Urban League for twenty-five years.

He did know. He said, "It's so obvious to any colored person who comes into Washington that all life is on a Jim-Crow basis, I don't know what to say." Then he went on to explain why he is so acutely aware of this. The first-hand experience of "all life on a Jim-Crow basis" came as a shock to him because during all his previous years as a "leader" of the Negro masses, he had resided in a lily-white neighborhood in New York! Enjoying a certain individual tolerance in recognition of his service in the field of inter-racial cooperation, he had chosen to capitalize it by living in a "white" apartment house. "Not another colored family in a square mile of us," he boasted. Ironically, he has to face the music in a Jim-Crow society personally, now that he is a Roosevelt official living on this federal ground.

He sat in his severely plain office in a deserted corner of the Commerce building. His Negro secretarial staff is segregated in the government dining room. (One personal privilege remains to Jones: at work, *he* eats with the white officialdom.)

There was an air of utter listlessness in this office behind the flagpole. I asked Jones just what his work was. He said, "I can take up any matter relating to Negroes. Any matter that would help to increase the Negro's prestige and power. Of course, my work cuts across other departments' activities, and naturally there is a certain amount of caution taken not to tread on the other fellow's toes. But, in all fairness, I think Mr. Roper is for seeing that the Negro gets a fair deal—that is, over against your system." Roper is one of the New Bourbons, a South Carolina lawyer who became Secretary of Commerce after winning his spurs as counsel to those notorious exploiters of Negroes, the American sugar barons in Cuba. I let this pass, however, inquiring rather just what Jones knew about "my" system.

"I mean—the Negro question—I mean that from your point of view, if there's a change in the whole darned system, the Negro would take his chance on getting a square deal *and I have no doubt he would.* But retaining the capitalist system as it is—and I think we will for a long time—Mr. Roper's attitude is to be commended."

"Do you think the Negro can get justice under this system?" I tried to pin him down.

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He replied, frowning, his long face a picture of mental somersaulting, "I believe that he will get it—which means that he can—as far as *any* poor man can. Of course poor white people can't get—" he caught himself in mid-air, then reassured himself aloud, "But I guess there is nothing so radical about that statement. Chief Justice Hughes said about the same thing the other night."

What did he think might remedy the Jim-Crow situation in Washington? He replied audaciously, "A Civil Rights bill."

"One like the bill formulated by the League of Struggle for Negro Rights?" This is a militant measure, proposing death to lynchers and prison for anyone violating social and political rights of Negroes.

"Yes," he said.

"But you don't support it, do you?"

For once Jones held his tongue. He merely smiled knowingly. I asked him to tell what he does do about Jim-Crowism.

"I came down here to do a national job," he replied plaintively. "I can't get too deeply involved in a *local* situation. I'm always having to be careful about that. I wish they wouldn't always be asking me to make speeches around here. I've turned down I don't know how many requests!"

WHY did the Roosevelt Administration plant Jones and several other prominent Negroes in conspicuous berths in Washington at the same time it set the pace of intensified discrimination against the Negro people? How does this concern the working people, both Negro and white?

Jones nearly put his finger on something when he mentioned "the whole darned system," but he concealed the *national* character of the oppression of the Negro, the crux of it. In these days of imperialism "one group of nations [a minority] lives upon the backs of another group of nations whom they exploit." In fact the imperialists, pressed by the crisis, redouble the national oppression of colonial and semi-colonial peoples all over the world. The 12,000,000 American Negroes are one of these oppressed *nations*. Some 9,000,000 live below the Mason-Dixon line today, constituting a majority of the whole population of the Black Belt that sweeps across portions of twelve states. This, with their lasting common language, economic life and customs, identifies them unquestionably as a nation. Recognizing the situation, the Communist Party supports the movement for national liberation of the Negro with the right to self-determination in the Black Belt, as the only road to full and lasting equality. It knows also that, just as the Negro could and did free himself from chattel slavery only by allying himself with the then revolutionary middle class in the Civil War, his only true ally today is the revolutionary working class, which in turn needs the Negro workers and share croppers in the struggle to throw off the yoke of wage slavery. But the white master class knows all this too, and views with increasing fear the sweep toward Negro and white working-class solidarity. In an effort to halt it, the white rulers call upon that reformist breed of Negro "leaders" who have always been upper-class foremen in the ranks of the Negro masses.

Sponsored by rich and powerful whites as well as by the Negro upper-class, the reformist leadership of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Urban League and others perform a real service to the white top-dogs; they try to channel the Negro workers' and farm laborers' longing for freedom into "safe" expressions. They are "blurring over the basic class interests of the Negro toilers, and trying to kill their will for militant struggle by injecting liberal antitoxin." It is for *this* task that Jones and his eminent fellow reformists have been summoned to Washington. One of their chief activities actually has been to travel over the country on speaking tours in an effort to sell the New Deal to the Negroes. They are the proteges of philanthropists who foster *segregated* educational and business projects for Negroes. The supreme trickery of their basic catch-slogan, "inter-racial cooperation," was demonstrated just recently in Washington, when a white teacher in charge of "character education" told a group of educators how she handled a difficult (to her mind) situation. It seems there were two schools, one for Negroes and the other for whites, on adjoining lots. The children quite naturally ran from one playground to the other and mingled at their games. Instead of dealing *harshly,* the teacher explained, she picked a committee of the white children and sent them to their Negro playmates to propose that they establish inter-racial cooperation, and *use the playgrounds at different hours.*

Jones is a member of the "Black Cabinet" assembled by the Roosevelt government at the very time it was giving official sanction to the writing of N.R.A. codes by big business with clauses singling out Negro workers for added degradation. The irony is that the Negro petty officialdom of the New Deal enjoy less authority and political pap than did the original "Black Cabinet" of the Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft administrations. In those past days when Negro Republicans controlled 126 votes in the party convention, they had something to bargain with. They pulled down such plums as Fourth Auditor of the Treasury, Register of the Treasury, Collector of the Port of New Orleans. They lost ground during recent regimes and the Roosevelt government has not replaced them. It has called in, rather, a large group of intellectuals whose numbers in no sense indicate power. They are really just a splinter of the white "Brain Trust," and, quite naturally, they get less for their pains than do the white professors for their intellectual prostitution.

The two most influential members of the "Black Cabinet" are half of the "Big Four" Negro Democrats. They won their reward by pouring molasses in the Democratic party's campaign for Negro votes. They are Robert L. Vann, Assistant to the Attorney General, and Dr. William J. Thompkins, Recorder of Deeds. Happily for Vann, he has no jurisdiction in matters such as lynching, against which many militant Negro and white-worker delegations have registered protests with the Attorney General. Vann's business (beyond the important matter of patronage) is to examine legal titles in the Department of Justice's division of public lands. Founder of The Pittsburgh Courier (which is, practically, an organ of the N.A.A.C.P.) and a crony first of the Republican Mellons' man, Senator David Reed, and then of the Democratic Mellons' man, Senator Joseph Guffey, Vann shifted during the 1932 campaign. He had hawked for Herbert Hoover and been done out of a plum, so he turned to the Democrats with all his assets and with better luck. Dr. Thompkins' job in the Recorder's office (traditional patronage prize because it carries with it a hundred or more clerkships in the office) likewise was the pay-off for whooping it up for Roosevelt—something into which Thompkins threw considerable prestige, since he had been superintendent of a Negro hospital in Kansas City.

The most abject "Uncle Tom" of the "Black Cabinet" is Lawrence A. Oxley. He bears the title of Chief of the Division of Negro Labor in the Department of Labor, but when I inquired about his duties, a white official could only hazard contemptuously that he "thought" there was a Negro somewhere around the Department! A native of Massachusetts, Oxley is proud to have the lynch country of North Carolina as his adopted state, and the Bourbon Senator Josiah W. Bailey as his sponsor. There is also Robert Weaver, Negro Advisor to the Interior Department. But what does he do? "Who knows? I don't think *he* does," answered a Negro intellectual who knows her Washington. "Supposedly he talks to the Secretary of the Interior. Actually the job boils down to this: if a Negro seeks an explanation of some specific discrimination, Weaver concocts an answer." It is my conviction that he takes his cues from William H. Hastie, Assistant Solicitor in the same Department. And Hastie, Phi Beta Kappa, graduate of Amherst and Harvard, Howard University professor, is in a sense the most intellectually corrupt of them all—for he is the ablest and the most keenly conscious of the imperative need for a meaningful challenge to the oppressors of his race.

THERE is a "Little Black Cabinet" too! It is far more insignificant—if you can imagine such nothingness — than the white Assistant Secretaries of the "Little Cabinet" after which it was named. In it are the *Head of the Division of Negro Correspondence,* whose title completely describes his duties, in the Federal Emergency Relief Administration; the Assistant Negro Advisor to

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the Interior Department; and several Negro technicians in the Subsistence Homesteads' division of planning Jim-Crow projects. Once there was also Edgar Brown, a bearded journalist with a scraping manner, whose business was to attend Relief Director Hopkins' and other press conferences, and inform the Negro press about the good works of the New Deal—*after the conferences*. A Daily Worker correspondent once embarrassed Brown by questioning Hopkins on his Jim-Crow policy; afterwards, Brown cringed about the offices drooling to his white superiors that the reporter who spoke up about the discrimination "made me ashamed of my profession." At last Brown became so obvious in his racial truckling that he lost his usefulness and was let out.

Negro journalists are excluded from government press conferences so much as a matter of course that when they turned up last year to cover a hearing on the so-called anti-lynching bill sponsored by the N.A.A.C.P., they were seated after some difficulty at a Jim-Crow press table and barred from the *public* restaurants which always exclude Negroes on both the House and Senate sides of the Capitol. There are a number of Negro "working press" in Washington. None was ever admitted to the White House Correspondents' Association, membership in which is required to attend the President's bi-weekly press conferences. None has ever been seen in the press galleries of Congress in which white correspondents enjoy many special privileges. For about two years of the Coolidge regime, two Negro writers did stand in on the White House conferences by virtue of the patronage of the President's canny Secretary, the late C. Bascom Slemp. He secured White House permission for Louis Lautier of The Afro and C. Lucien Skinner, who wrote for many Negro weeklies, to come in. Significantly, nothing happened until there was a shift of officers in the Correspondents' Association. Then on the initiative of a few Southern Negro-baiters, aided by the lassitude of many of the press corps toward the lynch philosophy, they were bounced out. The technicality was that at *this* point, after two years' attendance, the Negro writers were discovered to be ineligible. They did not write for daily newspapers and file stories by telegraph, the formal conditions for membership in the organizations.

The technicalities have been and still are sometimes waived. But in a pinch, of course, the favor of a ruling-class politician isn't worth a hoot. When the Negro reporters turned to their protector, Mr. Slemp responded with a pious hope and a polite rebuke. He wrote Skinner that he had "thought" the Negro writer "complied with the rules." He "hoped" Skinner would do so soon, but in any case, Skinner must remember "there must be some limitation" on admittance. Later, Representative Oscar DePriest, the Negro Republican Representative from Illinois, sought to dismiss the matter by solacing the Negro press with cards admitting them to the House gallery reserved for guests of the Congressmen. Of course it did not fool the journalists. They ventured to one of Postmaster General Jim Farley's press conferences soon after the Democrats came in—and promptly were put out.

The national Democratic machine headed by Farley and Franklin D. Roosevelt took the trouble to place their own representative, Arthur D. Mitchell, in DePriest's seat. I spoke to the new Congressman also about Jim-Crow conditions in Washington. I wished especially to consult him about some quotations I had seen imputed to him in both the white and the Negro press—declarations so openly cringing that, though I knew he had a reputation as the Number One Uriah Heep of the Negro people, I could scarcely believe them.

CONGRESSMAN MITCHELL received me with cloying courtesy, though he later told me to get out. When I referred to The Afro-American he warned me, "If it was in The Afro it's false on its face. It must be, because we don't allow their reporters in this office. They're trying to make out I'm doing a lot of kowtowing and not standing up for the rights of my race. It reminds me of when I was at Harvard studying English. I had a class in short story writing, and the motto in that class was 'Beware of the truth.' The Afro operates on that motto."

But when I insisted upon reading the quotation, he admitted, "Oh, yes, I said that." This is how it read:

> A great number of us have the idea to raise a rough house in the D. C., but our duty is first to make friends there and my duty is to make as good a Congressman as there is in Washington. I did not go to the D. C. to make a lot of noise, regardless of what the half-baked, half-informed editors say. . . . I want to make a correction. I don't want any of you to get the idea that I represent a colored district in Chicago. It's a mistake to believe that I am in Congress to represent my race.

The Congressman added emphatically to me: "And I *don't* represent a Negro district. There are 9,000 Italians in my district and 1,000 Chinese! And, more important, my district takes in all of the Chicago Loop. You know, that includes the whole financial district, the richest district in Chicago, the banks, the hotels, the office buildings—"

"You even represent the big Dawes bank that got the millions from the government when the ink was hardly dry on Dawes' resignation as head of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, Mr. Mitchell?"

"Why, yes!" He was warming up. "And the whole World's Fair is in my district."

"And the great gum king's building, the Wrigley building?"

"No," he said sadly, "the Wrigley building is just outside my district."

So these, the rich and mighty of business and finance, were the constituents Congressman Mitchell *admitted* he represents—these, rather than the thousands of poor oppressed Negroes in his district! The atmosphere of these offices was as oppressively obsequious as that of a first-class saloon of a transatlantic steamer.

"How many Negroes are there in your district?" I asked Mitchell.

He didn't know! When I persisted in asking for at least the percentage of Negroes, he said, "Oh, about half are Negroes." His fair face bobbed in repeated bows. He added:

"You can see I couldn't represent my race here any more than any other Congressman does. Its not my fault if I happen to be colored."

I checked him on the truth that he didn't represent his race any more than any "other" Congressman (for obviously no politician speaks for the Negro in Congress). Apparently mistaking the statement of the fact for approval of it, he purred: "I'd be a mighty big fool talking about Negroes around here. Why, I got more than two white votes to one Negro vote. These are facts the public should know." I agreed. Then Congressman Mitchell acknowledged the correctness of another quotation. He had said in an interview which appeared in The Washington Star:

> I don't plan to spend my time fighting out the question of whether a Negro may eat his lunch at the Capitol or whether he may be shaved in the House Barber Shop. What I am interested in is to help this grand President of ours feed the hungry and clothe the naked and provide work for the idle of every race and creed over which floats the stars and stripes.

Mitchell actually complained that old Oscar DePriest, his Republican predecessor, had been guilty of "arraying race against race." The DePriest whose monument is a ritzy suburb which is blazoned to the tourists on the broad highway as a Jim-Crow development! The signboard reads: "DePriest Village—For Colored." The DePriest whose answer to Howard University students picketing the Jim-Crow House restaurant was to introduce a resolution for an "investigation"—and at the same time to apologize for the students' action. The DePriest who is to the Republican wing of the ruling class what Jones is to the Democratic clique in power!

I ASKED Congressman Mitchell whether he hadn't seen all of the many statements by government and semi-official bodies showing that the poverty of the Negro masses has increased sharply under the New Deal launched by the man he called "this grand President of ours." I was thinking of the official reports cited recently by the Joint Committee on National Recovery, an instrument of Negro reformist groups. The Committee pointed to F. E. R. A. figures showing that *registered* unemployed and their dependants increased from 2,117,000 in October, 1933, to 3,500,000 in January, 1935. The Committee charged the A. A. A. with depriving 800,000, predominantly Negroes, of

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farm work. The Joint Committee was set up to combat deliberate discriminations against Negro workers which were written into the N.R.A. codes under the crude disguise of geographical differentials. For example, the code for the fertilizer industry, in which most of the employes are Negroes, established a North-South differential and proclaimed Delaware in the "southern" lower-wage bracket, while in other codes covering white-worker industries, geography was recognized and Delaware was set down properly among the northern states. In addition, the Negro worker has faced innumerable refusals to comply with even the meager wage and hour standards set, and of speed-up and stretch-out tactics. All to the accompaniment of always-higher prices of necessities. The degree to which Negroes have been forced to produce more for less compensation is indicated by a recent Federal Reserve Board's report. It shows that in so typical a field of Negro labor as the tobacco industry, payrolls dropped 1.3 points on the index standard, employment dropped 2 points, during the period between November, 1933 and November, 1935, while production rose 50 points.

Congressman Mitchell didn't give me a chance to mention anything specific. He became legalistic and a trifle hostile, saying he hadn't seen "all" the statements. Had he seen any, then? He dodged, "I think you can see anything you want to see in this great land of ours."

"What do you see, Mr. Mitchell? What do you see as the effect of the New Deal upon the Negro people?"

"Oh, I have my own mind about that," he replied. He was eyeing me with increasing suspicion. He slipped into the speech of his native Black Belt, adding, "I don't know yo' motives no way."

I reminded him I had explained at the outset that I represented The Daily Worker and THE NEW MASSES. His secretary came in to tell him someone was waiting to see him. He told me, "There's been no discrimination against *me* here. *I* eat in the House restaurant and take guests there. *I'm* shaved in the House Barber Shop."

Mitchell even rides in Pullmans below the Mason-Dixon line, he explained. Years ago the general manager of the Southern Railroad assured him that Pullmans were "for gentlemen—educated, high-class men of either race." High-class! "Why, Mr. Mitchell, do you approve of such distinctions between the upper class and the working class of both races?" His catlike eyes grew narrower. "I said educated," he corrected, "and of course an educated man is capable of rendering greater service to society. Though I don't think there should be any discrimination as far as human rights. . . ."

"What are we talking about right now, if not about human rights?"

"This interview is over." The Congressman stood up. "Someone is waiting to see me."

"A moment ago you said something about my coming back later—?"

"No!" The word slid through his compressed lips. "No, I wouldn't talk to you." He moved to a side door and motioned to me. "You go right out this way. Why, for all I know you might be mixed up with those Communists!"

Correspondence

The Drive on Hearst

To THE NEW MASSES:

William Randolph Hearst is beginning to feel the mass pressure of the boycott movement and is running ads in all the newspapers, at considerable expense, protesting his political good-will toward the American people (except aliens) and reiterating his faith in the American institutions. Hearst has taken a backward step from his advanced reactionary position as evidenced in his attacks on the educational system, on militant workers, on the Soviet Union.

It is plain that the boycott of the Hearst papers is beginning to hurt. Hearst is appealing for support.

Now is the time to turn on the heat. Don't buy the Hearst papers! Don't advertise in the Hearst papers! Don't buy the Hearst magazines! Spread the boycott!

H. DAKIN.

Modern Library's Contest Winners

To THE NEW MASSES:

The prize winners for the Modern Library contest advertised in your issue of March 5th, 1935, are as follows: First prize (25 Modern Library books), won by Abe Dickerman, 759-46th St., Brooklyn, N. Y. Second prize (5 Modern Library books), won by Joseph Kalar, Box 48, Holler, Minnesota. Five third prizes (1 Modern Library book), won by John C. Rogers, 325 Braddock Road, Alexandria, Virginia; Helen Malarevskaya, 4 Mestchanskaya 6, Moscow, U.S.S.R.; Harry Gorman, 253 Rogers Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.; Laurence Crooks, Northampton, Mass., and A. C. Garrison, Hamilton, N. Y.

The hundred-word essays reveal an interesting cross-section of the social, economic and artistic points of view, as they apply to literature, of NEW MASSES readers. These essays indicate a clear grasp of literary history and an awareness of contemporary problems. The prize-winning letters would be of immense interest to your readers, and are available for publication in your magazine. Please announce the winners as listed in this letter.

The response to our advertisement indicates that THE NEW MASSES reaches an extraordinarily literate public. It was extremely gratifying to us to learn through this experimental advertisement that so many of your readers read and appreciate the books in the Modern Library.

BELLE BECKER,
Editorial Department,
New York City Modern Library.

We Stand Corrected

To THE NEW MASSES:

In the April 30 issue of New Masses I note the use of a term, which if not an error, is at least bad usage. Underneath the cartoon of Hearst and his chorus of garbage-spouting slanderers of the working class, was this sentence: "Hearst's Hill Billy Crooners."

Such usage of this term is a slur and an insult to a broad mass of white workers and poor farmers, especially in the South. This term "hill billy" is one applied to the mountain people—poor white workers and farmers who are among the most oppressed of the South. The masses of Southern textile workers and coal miners are "hill billies," or as some call us, "white trash."

My whole background is that of the mountaineer, "hill billy," "white trash." I know my folks would resent such a hook-up in the use of the term as NEW MASSES used. While it is not an exact analogy, you can easily see what effect it would have on the Negro people to say "Hearst 'nigger' Spiritualists." You can also see how incorrect this would be. Of course there are quartets and bands calling themselves "hill billy" musicians, etc. So do Amos and Andy pass themselves off as representing the "typical Negro." But for a magazine like THE NEW MASSES to hook up any of these terms with the Hearst slander and lies, is in my opinion entirely incorrect and unwarranted. I hope this will be corrected and that you will be much more careful in the use of such anti-working class terms in the future.

DON WEST.

Kennesaw, Ga.

Letters in Brief

Ben Erenberg reproaches us for never mentioning the Young Pioneers and their magazine, The New Pioneer. The New Pioneer is having a circulation drive at present, in an effort to widen its field among working-class children, and to counteract "the increased efforts of the capitalist system in organizing the children. A good example of the enemy's work is an organization called the Young Birdsmen of America, organized by W. R. Hearst, and a weekly paper called Young America."

H. F. Kane liked Dale Curran's appraisal of revolutionary literature in the issue of April 9. George H. Phelps was stirred by Mitchel Siporin's drawings of the Haymarket in the issue of May 7, which recalled to him his reactions to the event itself when he read of it in a Chicago paper in 1886.

Constant Reader finds Earl Browder's question-and-answer department with his articles worth making a permanent feature of the magazine.

John W. Houston, of Ewin Bridges, Mont., joins in the discussion of the contents of the magazine with some very definite criticism. He thinks there is too much literary discussion and not enough treatment of political and economic topics. "You ought to be waging a weekly assault on the New Deal, following its developments and opposing them. There ought to be more (and plenty more) material on the farm situation. The third party movement should be watched and criticized. More on Soviet Russia and less on its literature." Incidentally he asks, "Who the hell cares about Dreiser and where will he get us?"

A lot of readers care. John Paulson, Sophie McGill, Bertha Sonder, J. Cohen and R. Cohen sign one letter protesting that we have treated Dreiser too gently; Celia Salkin writes in similar vein; J. H. Korth and Rose Richman find Michael Gold's article on Dreiser in the May 14 issue excellent. Robert Hall is severe in his criticism of our editorial on Dreiser, and finds that Gold, even though he did a good job, didn't go far enough.

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REVIEW AND COMMENT

Kenneth Fearing: A Poet for Workers

THE evolution of the author of *Angel Arms* is amazing, and his place in American literature is not so easy to define as a glance at his book would immediately suggest. So close to America, he is actually more in the tradition of the French Symbolists. There is very much in his life, temperament and talents that recall Tristan Corbiere. His fantastic patterns of slang and speech, "reasoned derangements of all the senses," his gargoylish diableries, are those of a Tristan Corbiere, torn out of context and place, but a Corbiere with Marxian insights. *Angel Arms,* published in 1929, was a slender but gifted volume of lean ironies, acid portraits of Woolworth shopgirls and New Yorkese cadences of doggerel lives.

In his *Poems* he has succeeded in inditing the sleazy cinema dreams, the five and dime loves and frustrations, the mystery pulp heroism and furnished room microcosm of the pulverized petty bourgeois. And this he has done with a novelist's technic; for besides being poems they are, in effect, short novels, with all the day-to-day thickness of incident, smell, dust, walls of the French nouvelles.

The poems have also the narrative development of the novel: at the beginning, there are close-ups of the bought magistrates, the disincarnated radio voice, the swivel-chair magnates, heard in private monologue and seen in "unrehearsed acts." The theme unscrolls and the "bargain heroes" stalk across the screen: the Will Hayses, the Gene Tunneys, the Al Capones—and "the ectoplasm" of the "profitable smile hovers inescapably everywhere about us."

By now the venal movie-cathedral mores have been established; the fatuity and "steam-heated grief" of the dividend-rulers, with their covert, nasty sense of guilt have been witnessed. The actual horror-show then begins, but the most profoundly moving cinematographic horror-show in contemporary poetry. Stephen Spender's "The city builds a horror in his brain," is an etiolated abstract statement the specific truth and spectre of which is to be found in Kenneth Fearing's poems.

The tinfoil hopes, the thwarted aspirations and hollywoodesque ikons of the hopeless lower middle class are disclosed. It is a crushed procession of recumbent rooming house souls soaked in mazed, sanitarium dreams but forever being awakened by evictions and hunger. "You were decorated forty-six times in rapid succession by the King of Italy, took a Nobel Prize. Evicted again, you went downtown, slept at the movies." They listen to the obscenely unctuous Radio Voice, seeking "the rib of sirloin wrapped in papal documents."

The poet interweaves comments done with a news-reel eye but with inexorable Marxist interpretations: "All winter she came there begging for milk. So we had the shacks along the river burned by fire." "The child was nursed on Government bonds. Cut its teeth on a hand grenade. Grew fat on shrapnel. . . . Laughed at the bayonet through its heart." Here is the entire cycle of life and death today; and here are lines from a deeply imagined poem which make a perfect slogan.

Fearing is relentlessly tortured and for a moment it would seem as if despair were in the ascendancy. There is a funerary cry: "Something must be saved . . . from the rats and the fire on the city dumps; something for warmth through the long night of death." But in "Dénouement" a poem which, were it extended, would be a major piece of our times, the poet, looking beyond the horizon toward a socialist civilization, a Vita Nuova of the workers, sings out:

> Sky be blue, and more than blue; wind, be flesh and blood, flesh and blood, be deathless;
> walls, streets, be home;
> desire, of millions, become more real than warmth and breath and strength and bread.

Kenneth Fearing's irony is very special, unique in the history of American poetry. Were it not freighted with pity and a gnarled, pulsating tenderness it would be a leer. But here is one of the most perfect examples of satire in literature in its truest light, that is, in its most tragic hue. It is as if Satire had ironically disrobed herself.

His names, symbols, Beatrice Fairfax, Jesse James, Aimee Semple McPherson, selected with uniform intention, are to make use of his own words, Rialto Equations. Thus the apostrophe to Beatrice Fairfax becomes clear: she is a reversed Dantean Beatrice in a Paramount moving picture Vita Nuova. And this is as near to Rimbaud's hell as any mortal would care to approach.

Behind these equations, these "reasoned derangements," is satire turned upside down, that is, horror and revulsion. Underneath the "death-ray smile," anguish and torture. The reader must reverse every ironic comment and title to uncover the true intention.

The poet's outlook, which in *Angel Arms* was like an elliptical recollection of the laugh-

* *Poems by Kenneth Fearing.* Published by Dynamo. $1.00.

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ing gas of rodents in a dismembered dream, becomes something very positive in the *Poems*. Here the intuitions and picture are an accusation and a foreshadowing of the doom of the whole capitalistic society: "Maggots and darkness will attend the alibi." And as the poems in their chronological progression become more incisive and attain Marxian lucidity, the caustic comments rise; expand into an affirmative Communist statement.

We should pause to sample the kind of telling irony in the poems, as in, "What if Jesse James Should Some Day Die?"

> Where will we ever again find food to eat, clothes to wear, a roof and a bed, now that the Wall Street plunger has gone to his hushed, exclusive, paid-up tomb?
> How can we get downtown today, with the traction king stretched flat on his back in the sand at Miami Beach?

Compare this with a passage in a somewhat similar vein out of Cecil Day Lewis' *The Magnetic Mountain*:

> As for you, Bimbo, take off that false face!
> You've ceased to be funny, you're in disgrace.
> We can see the spy through the painted grin;
> You may talk patriotic but you can't take us in.

Lewis and Auden, gifted poets, Oxonians and sincere Communist sympathizers, are uneasy whenever they fall into colloquialisms; their satire has a platitudinous glitter—rhythm also becomes pedestrian. Their uncertainty and banality in direct communication has a very definite class basis. In the use of pasquinade and the speech of the masses in poetry Fearing is not only at his best but has no peer either here or abroad.

Examine the texture of bitterness, and elegiac tenderness for the oppressed, in "Lullaby," almost entirely wanting in the bohemian poet of *Angel Arms*:

> are the trees that line the country estates, tall as the lynch trees, as straight, as black;
> is the moon that lights the mining towns; dim as the light upon tenement roofs, grey upon the hands at the bars of Moabit, cold as the bars of the Tombs.

Or in his "and let the paid-up rent become South Sea Music," a song of the unemployed.

Doubtless, some of the cash-register columnists will utter: "Mean streets and sordid lives in verse." For whenever a writer has revealed what is ghastly true in present-day society they have dismissed his book with this sort of cant headline. But the poet here can reply: "Did I create these mean streets, this hunger, this dollar sordidness?"

Kenneth Fearing's poems are never precious or esoteric. In essentials, they are close to the mood of the oppressed.

Kenneth Fearing is a poet for workers; his poems are deeply incarnadined in evictions, strikes, homelessness, protest; but his appeal is not restricted to his class. His poetry, for those who are still wavering, is one more piece of documented evidence of the horrible mutilation of human dreams and nobleness under capitalism. In very truth, such a fecund talent belongs especially to us.

EDWARD DAHLBERG.

Studs Lonigan in Conclusion

JUDGMENT DAY, by James Farrell. Vanguard Press. $2.50.

THE last volume of a trilogy is a sure test. *Judgment Day* should illuminate the first two volumes for those who persist in thinking of the story of Studs Lonigan as an isolated history of a Chicago neighborhood tough. Reviewers who have tried to push away the implications of Farrell's work on the ground that its concern was with adolescents and Irish-Americans and therefore not widely representative, can do so no longer. Harry Hansen may substitute a harangue on whether it is or is not art but it reminds me only of the kind of criticism leveled at Balzac by the contemporary critics of his day. The terriffic impact of the Studs Lonigan material comes to so splendid a conclusion in *Judgment Day* that it can only escape the reader nervously bent on escape.

Studs Lonigan is now thirty. Since the night of the New Year's Eve brawl on which the second volume ended, he is no longer the strong figure he once was. He is a weak little runt with a bad heart, who seems to be getting the sour grapes of living. The opening chapter of *Judgment Day* is one of the soundest beginnings of any work of fiction that I know of. It is a perfect example of the relevancy of the apparently "irrelevant" and Farrell's method never had a more triumphant vindication. Studs Lonigan and some of his old Fifty-fifth Street gang are returning from the funeral of one of their number. They are riding in a train back to Chicago and through their conversation, given photographically if you like, the implications of the first two books are closely tied to *Judgment Day* in the only convincing way such an alignment can be made, through details falling naturally and inevitably into place through conscious selection from larger masses.

It is no accident that Studs Lonigan, sickly and nervously fearing defeat, braces himself here in a determination to be healthy and outlive them all. The failures of his old pals are too plain before him; men out of work or on small time jobs. Only one of them seems to be on the road toward success in the role of puny politician. As the train rattles on, the old gang try to pump up confidence with nostalgic rembrances of past exploits of drinking, fighting and whoring and through this chapter the tragic hope of Studs to be a big shot is coupled with a sense of doom that death will trip him first. It is no accident that Studs in one of the fine natural pieces of dialogue about death that this chapter contains, hopes in words that one feels were transmitted to him through the movie or fiction, that, when he dies he "will go out like a light." One need only to compare his actual death with this passage to realize the extent to which Farrell ties up the threads.

The year is 1931. Where the orgy of the New Year's Eve celebration coincided with the fall of the stock market in 1929, the personal decay of the boys of the old gang coincides with the ravages of "Old Man Depression." Studs, fitfully working for his father on papering and painting jobs, begins a battle to win back after the attack of pneumonia following the orgy. His personal hope has no firmer basis than have the reassurances given the world at large by press and radio that "prosperity is around the corner." He begins his struggle weakened by excesses. His one rock of Gibraltar, savings of two thousand dollars, is invested in Insull stock. The stock slips, he tries to bolster himself to a sense of the solidity of living by an engagement with a girl who is not the enchanting Lucy of his younger days. Through a series of small events, saturating the reader with a full sense of the remorseless conflict between the individual and the society he is up against, the deadly poison of defeat for Studs drops with sure premonition.

It is no accident that Studs loses in a humiliating tussle with his younger brother, that at the lodge initiation he fails to register as a leader, that in an effort to show off while swimming he gets only a heart attack and in the very caption of a movie, "Doomed Victory," picturing the defeat of a gangster type on whom he formerly patterned himself, he fearfully senses his own finish. His hope that he may still pull the royal flush from the deck of life is so moving and makes for so terrible a suspense because it is the American hope.

This hope never had a surer background in fiction than here, where it falls on such barren ground, where the noble wish to be somebody can find no happier expression than in dance marathons, drinking bouts, aimless strutting and fights. Studs, "dreamily listening to sugar-sad music, feeling lousy" is pretty much all America. It is the America of the small shopkeeper, the not yet class-conscious worker who listens to Coughlin and Huey Long on the radio and to whom "Red" talk is not anathema, but just plain "nuts."

It is significant that two parallels are developed sure-footedly in *Judgment Day*. The doom of Studs, presaged drop by drop in minor defeats that culminate in the last sacrament of the priest, is put into its final category by the drop-by-drop consciousness of the counter movement, the rise of the working class as the fabric of the present society disintegrates. It is not by chance that the triumphant Red parade follows the mumbo-jumbo of the priest called to Studs' deathbed.

Paddy Lonigan, the father, stands watching the parade, aware that he is an unhappy man and that the people in the parade were happy, happier than he was, yet he cannot reconcile it with his Catholic religious past and resolves his misery in a bar. The mother must not only bear the death of her son but the miserable knowledge that her son's sweetheart will bear his child and the shameful presence of a drunken father and a drunken brother in the house of death. The reality of this family is positive. They come to such conviction

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through no faked spectacular moments. Life is enough; it is dramatic and rich beyond belief Farrell would tell you, and the details slide into one another with the dramatic certainty of the actual.

It is impossible to touch adequately in a brief review on the many points of this rich and moving book but no one who misses it can afford to discuss contemporary fiction. Farrell's use of the radio, the newspaper, of chance conversations, developed as a natural part of the narration in which no details are useless but depend only upon relation for validity, is excellent as a means to relate the events of the world to the smaller world he has chosen. His characters may move on limited orbits but the universe to which they articulate, sometimes without being conscious of their particular articulation, is clearly shown. Fascism, international banking. strikes, bank failures, the whole gradual slide downward of the petty shopkeeper and small homeowner class of which Studs is a representative, looms behind the Lonigan family as part and parcel of it. His decay and death are of a larger pattern than a personal failure. The personal has been linked to the general so skillfully that one does not realize the bones. They are firm under the warm flesh, and it is this hardness and firmness that makes *Judgment Day* so sound and sure that it must be ranked with the best fiction that this country has produced.

JOSEPHINE HERBST.

Thunder Over the Pacific

MUST WE FIGHT IN ASIA? by Nathaniel Peffer. New York: Harper and Brothers. 244 pages. $2.50.
THE CASE FOR MANCHOUKUO, by George Bronson Rea. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co. 425 pages. $3.50.
TOWARD UNDERSTANDING JAPAN, by Sidney L. Gulick. New York: Macmillan. 270 pages. $2.
JAPAN'S PACIFIC MANDATE, by Paul H. Clyde. New York: Macmillan. 244 pages. $3.

NATHANIEL PEFFER stands head and shoulders above the normal run of American students of Far Eastern politics. Grounded in the main on a Marxist analysis of politico-economic factors, his writings are distinguished by a clarity of style and cogency of reasoning conspicuously absent in the flood of books on the Far East that has poured from the bourgeois press in recent years. In these respects the volume listed above is no exception. His latest work correctly stresses the importance of the Chinese market to American capitalism. Brushing aside the querulously liberal pleas regarding the paucity of American trade and investment in China, Mr. Peffer lays bare the decisive factors which forbid the withdrawal of American interests from that area. No foreign market in this stage of capitalism's decline, he argues, can be freely relinquished when factories are idle and unsold surpluses are piling up. Least of all can American capitalism forego the potentialities of the great undeveloped market of China, especially since the core of its policy for at least a century has been the maintenance of unrestricted access to this market.

Turning to Japan, Mr. Peffer underscores the driving forces behind the advance of Japanese imperialism in Eastern Asia. Hegemony in the East has been Japan's aim for twenty years, or even longer. In 1915 the way was made temporarily open, and Japan pressed forward vigorously; in 1921 the opportunity had passed, and Japan had to beat a retreat. Now the way is once more open, and this time Japan's ruling class does not intend to fail. In the meantime, the exigencies of the situation have become more pressing. To assure its survival, Japanese imperialism must expand. This expansion will inevitably force a conflict with either the Soviet Union or the United States.

At this point in his argument the validity of Mr. Peffer's analysis breaks down, and he is diverted into an unconvincing brief for the inevitability of a Japanese-American conflict. A few sentences (on page 154) illustrate rather clearly how this occurs. After voting that "the United States will not passively accept the prospect of the Far East falling to Japan," he continues: "And here we come to the crux of the international situation in the Far East. Deepest down, the Far Eastern conflict is a Japanese-American conflict. In the immediate future there is greater danger of a Russo-Japanese war, precipitated by the unpremeditated incident. If that is averted, the drift of political and economic forces, the whole development of our times, is toward a war between Japan and the United States."

Now, despite its qualification, the whole force of this statement is to exclude adequate consideration of possible alternatives to a Japanese-American conflict. It denies, however unwittingly, the basic contradiction of the post-war epoch—the existence of the Soviet Union in a capitalist world. This is the conflict that is "deepest down" in the Far East, as Mr. Peffer should know. Full recognition of it would have prevented him from boxing off the Soviet-Japanese and Japanese-American difference into separate compartments and treating them without proper appreciation of their inter-relationships. For this crucial element in the problem clearly acts to draw Japan and the United States together, despite their acute conflict, so that these two and the Soviet Union cannot be treated simply as three rival powers. This qualitative difference requires a weighing of the factors in the Far Eastern equation which Mr. Peffer fails to supply. Similarly, he underestimates the significance of the Chinese Communist movement in

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throwing Japan and the United States together against the Soviet Union.

A full-rounded Marxist analysis of the Far Eastern problem cannot possibly admit the validity of an arbitrary separation of the Soviet-Japanese and Japanese-American conflicts, much less concentrate its main attention on proving the inevitability of a Japanese-American clash. It must keep both these conflicts in view, note their interactions, and also take account of the other Powers affected. Above all, the special meaning of the Soviet Union's existence in a capitalist world must be taken as the starting-point for an adequate analysis of imperialist rivalries in Eastern Asia. With this focus the Far Eastern picture undergoes a considerable change. In the first place, the triangular relationships between the United States, Japan and the Soviet Union assume a much greater importance than Mr. Peffer accords them. From this angle, the possible effects of the rupture of Soviet-American debt negotiations on the Far Eastern situation cannot be excluded from consideration. Nor can the Hearst anti-Soviet campaign and its concomitants. At this moment American capitalism appears to be veering toward the conviction that its Far Eastern interests would be best served by a Soviet-Japanese war. Japan has not been backward in suggestions to this end. They can be traced clearly enough in Ambassador Saito's speeches, while (in the second volume under review) Mr. George Bronson Rea—an American adviser to "Manchoukuo"—openly solicits United States cooperation with Japan in an anti-Soviet crusade. In the second place, the European crisis centering about Nazi Germany, with its violent anti-Soviet bias, also enters into the picture. Japan's moves will be deeply affected by what occurs in Europe. Its close connections with Poland and Germany are certainly no secret. The Far Eastern arena, in short, is much more complicated than Mr. Peffer's oversimplified analysis would indicate.

The rest of the books listed above may be briefly dismissed. For utter absurdity, Mr. Rea's anti-Soviet tirade (the Soviet Union has inherited the aims of Peter the Great!) is equalled only by the benevolent intentions he credits to Japan and the innocent simplicity he attributes to the American ruling class. . . . Mr. Sidney Gulick, a missionary friend of Japan, argues the latter's case against the United States with some justice, but stomachs Japanese outrages in China without a qualm—at Shanghai, he notes, Japan's "punishment" taught China's leaders "the folly of trying to coerce Japan either by armies or by boycotts instigated as instruments of national policy." The "constructive" peace program with which he concludes is a pot-pourri of liberal nostrums. . . . Professor Clyde's book is valuable as the first comprehensive study of Japan's mandated islands. One of his chapters deals with the question as to whether Japan has fortified any of the islands in its Pacific mandate. The Japanese government, he observes in this connection, has spent 1,400,000 yen improving Saipan harbor in the Mariana Islands. In case of war, he feels that this harbor would probably be used as a submarine base. On the other hand, he claims that the importance of the sugar industry (exports to Japan worth 6 million yen in 1932) justified this expenditure at Saipan, and he argues that the harbor itself is unsuited to serve as an effective naval base either in size, position, natural surroundings, or present equipment. His judgment apparently is that in improving Saipan, Japan has in no way violated the provisions of the mandate.

DONALD HEMSLEY.

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He Didn't Die in Bed

CHAPAYEV, by Dmitri Furmanov. International Publishers. $1.50.

THIS biography of a Russian Civil War hero stands in striking contrast to the usual accounts of military figures. For while the latter have either extolled the value of war in defense of ideals that do not exist, or have been disillusioned descriptions of death and brutalization in the struggle to preserve a decaying order, *Chapayev* is the history of the determined fight to build a new society. War is not idealized: it remains brutal, ugly, ruthless. But the men who threw back the White invaders, who defended the young Soviet State, were imbued with the idea that success meant the affirmation of a new life, a life that promised real liberation, real opportunity, real security for all who survived those crucial years.

Chapayev is not a bourgeois hero. He is a true peasant hero, a man who by his resourcefulness, self-confidence and devotion to his cause, could lead an ill-equipped and often untrained band of men against the military machine of the Whites and still conquer them by his brilliant leadership and ability to inspire his men with the belief that they could not lose.

But at the same time Chapayev was hot-tempered, politically immature, distrustful of his superiors, stubborn, capricious. He was a guerrilla leader, not a master general. He was the product of his times. As Furmanov says, "In other days there was not and could not be a Chapayev. Chapayev was born of the masses as they were at that time and no other." He had the bravery, the resolution, the unavoidable cruelty and stern temper of such leaders, but he was an organizer only in the sense that he inspired with his own courage and impetuosity the men who fought under him. Politically, he was and remained to his death on the battlefield, undeveloped. And the political education of the men fighting the Whites was fully as important as their victories. It was imperative that the Red Army soldiers know why they were fighting. This task, fully as demanding and often as dangerous as Chapayev's, fell on the shoulders of the few commissars, of whom Furmanov is a splendid example. The Whites were defeated not only by military strategy and the energy of the soldiers, but also by the educational work that was carried on in the ranks of the Red Army with undiminished energy by the political leaders.

For those who have seen the film *Chapayev,* Furmanov's book fills in the gaps, gives a more detailed picture and a more comprehensive knowledge of what the Civil War meant to the new Soviet Union. And for those who have not the opportunity of seeing the film, the biography is a remarkable picture of an heroic time, making clear a critical stage of the revolution.

BRUCE MINTON.

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The Dance

THERE was good reason for the unusual excitement when the "Men in the Dance" program was announced for May 3 and 4. For one thing, an all-male evening of thirteen dancers is in itself an event. Furthermore, by their appearance in a New Dance League-New Theatre Magazine project these artists have aligned themselves for the first time in an organizational program against war, fascism and censorship. In view of the repressive bills now before the New York Board of Aldermen, such an evening as this one at the Park Theatre could not have been better timed.

Divided into three group numbers, a duet and thirteen solos, "Men in the Dance" as a whole displayed a technical excellence unusual even in New Dance League programs. In several cases it almost succeeded in vitalizing innocuous or weary material. Surely the tenuous substance of Gene Martel's "Anathema" and "Parade" might have gone quite unremembered had these pieces been less deftly performed. Similarly William Dollar's handful of ballet-tricks which brought down the house on two successive nights, much to the disgust of a handful of hissing dissenters.

Except for Jose Limon's "Danza" (a brief design done with masterful ease) and Charles Weidman's "Kinetic Pantomime" (a tidbit of bright irony), the solo work as a whole fell short of full success. There was deft parody in Roger Pryor Dodge's "St. Louis Blues" and a certain excitement in Ludwig Lefebre's "Menace," but the parody was too mild, the excitement too dependent on cleverness. Upon second seeing William Matons' "Demagog" remained a witty caricature; and yet its edges were somewhat dulled by lengthiness—which also canceled much of the power latent in his new composition, "While Waiting for Relief." Here Matons gives a clear demonstration of his solo method: a series of attitudes barely connected by sudden, brief transitions. Recreating the insane desperation of the man waiting for relief, Matons builds up a sequence of absorbing power. But although it is essential for the emotion to intensify, it is impossible to sustain it on a level of unrelieved feverish intensity; wherefore this work at times seems in danger of snapping into bits.

Of the four group numbers "Black and White," by Ad Bates and Irving Lansky, was the most clearly political. Its message of black and white union gleamed brightly—perhaps in its oversimplification, overbrightly—in contrast to many relatively complex numbers on the program. "Traditions" performed by Weidman, Limon and Matons (specially composed for this occasion and still in need of shortening) glittered with witty passages and flashes of cutting humor. Representing in simple, unequivocal terms the destruction of old traditions for new ones, it is a compelling interpretation of the same general theme which Sophie Maslow, Anna Sokolow and Lily Mehlman used so well in their recent "Death of a Tradition."

The undoubted masterpiece of the evening was Weidman's group dance, "Studies in Conflict." Its flawless interweaving of body rhythms and its "dynamic tableaux" produced instants of breath-taking choreographic beauty. The composition as a whole was vigorous, balanced and altogether memorable. If for no other reason than this work, "Men in the Dance" could be counted a success. But this reviewer, at least, hopes that several of the numbers will be repeated on future "Men in the Dance" programs—among them surely the Kenneth Bostock-Jose Limon-William Matons "Dance of Sports," a splendid group dance—balanced, vigorous and gay.

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The Pulitzer Prizes

ROBERT FORSYTHE

LAST WEEK a playwriting friend of mine was busily engaged on a musical comedy sketch which had to do with the appearance at a theatre box office of a man who was deaf and blind. The companion of the deaf and blind man was insisting that they were entitled to free seats to the performance and the box office man was just as vehemently refuting the notion. Furthermore, demanded the box office man, what was a deaf and blind man doing at a show, anyhow? It was then that the theatre manager rushed up in great agitation. "Let them in at once," he hissed into the ear of his employe. "Can't you see the gentleman is a member of the Pulitzer Prize Committee!"

The sketch will not be used in a show because the imbecility of the Pulitzer Prize choices is now taken for granted and nobody regards the nonsense seriously any longer. There are a few sensitive souls who writhe in torture when the awards are made but in general the populace gets prepared to laugh and is never disappointed. Occasionally there is an excellent choice—such as the selection of Josephine Johnson's *Now in November* for this year's novel prize—but the exceptions are not notable. We may perhaps confine ourselves to saying that if there is money to be thrown about and needy people to get it, the greater idiocy of the choices themselves can be overlooked. Beyond that I wouldn't care to go.

What has thrown everybody into a dither this year is the choice of *The Old Maid* as the prize play, but, as Richard Lockridge pointed out in The New York Sun, we should be happy that the mantle of greatness did not fall instead upon *Reprise,* which escaped the judges by the fact that it lasted only one night. What amuses me is the chagrin of the Broadway gambling fraternity which knew that William Lyon Phelps was one of the judges and were yet amazed at the selection of *The Old Maid.* It happens that I was also wrong in my choice but at least I was on the right track. When I heard that Dr. Phelps and Dr. John Erskine were among the judges, I placed a small wager on *Way Down East* and *St. Elmo.* I understand they were well up on the list.

I can still recall the amazement with which I read the prize editorial in the 1934 awards. The depression, according to this middle-western editorial gentleman, was caused by our failure to cling to the old-fashioned American virtue of thrift. Reading the editorial was an experience. The words were English but as you went along you suddenly became aware that you were walking about in that strange hinterland where insanity is just over the hillside and absurdity everywhere under foot. The words seemed to be something you might have seen before but they were not making sense. This year the judges, evidently finding nothing lunatic enough for their tastes, made no choice. How they could have overlooked the magnificent delirium of the late Richard Washburn Child in the Hearst papers is beyond me.

The lot of the judges was not an enviable one this year. In thinking of plays, they finally narrowed the choice to *The Old Maid* or *Valley Forge,* which was the great bore of the season, or *Personal Appearance,* which was too cheap and obvious even for a Pulitzer jury, or *Merrily We Roll Along,* which was one of the worst of the Kaufman collaborations. Once away from that list, they got into dangerous water. They were confronted with *Children's Hour,* with its inverted sex theme or with what was far worse: fine plays on social subjects. If you can imagine William Lyon Phelps or John Erskine casting a vote for *Black Pit* or *Awake and Sing* or *Waiting for Lefty* or *Stevedore* (which was eligible for the prize and was undoubtedly the best play in years) you can believe in the revolutionary intentions of Bishop Manning.

When it came to newspapers, the dilemma became even more pronounced, and the choices were hilarious. Finding it incumbent upon themselves to select something which would offend no sensitive nature, they hit upon William H. Taylor's reporting of the yacht races. This was probably done on the old newspaper adage that it is always safe to attack the man-eating shark. Such widely separated periodicals as The Nation and The American Spectator and Life Magazine had agreed that the outstanding newspaper series of the year was John L. Spivak's Nazi exposure in THE NEW MASSES. Mr. Spivak's work was definitely in the Pulitzer tradition. From every angle, it was an ideal choice for the prize. The massing of pertinent information was an achievement which won the admiration of newspapermen everywhere. The writing was brilliant and the publication of the series was a public service of the highest importance.

But the Pulitzer gentlemen felt that Mr. Taylor had done something particularly nice on the yacht races. For one thing he had saved their lives, even if he had not assured them of fame. When the history of pre-Soviet America is compiled, the judges who felt that the agonies of Mr. Harold Vanderbilt and the Hon. T. O. M. Sopwith were of moment in a year which included the San Francisco general strike will be rewarded with a footnote which will not amuse their descendants.

The fact that The Sacramento Bee, most prominent red baiter in California, has been rewarded for its work in uncovering graft in Nevada is perhaps only a coincidence. The further fact that Rose A. Lewis of The Milwaukee Journal should win the cartoonist award for a picture seeking to show that violence is equally the fault of the workers and the owners is another coincidence. But worrying about the Pulitzer prizes is like worrying about a favorable book review by William Soskin in The New York American. As I have previously pointed out in connection with the theatre, it is a mistake on the part of left-wing intellectuals to allow themselves to be influenced by anything happening in the camp of the enemy. If William Lyon Phelps should suddenly decide that *Black Pit* is a great play, I should want to go back and look at it. Not only are such gentlemen anti-radical but they are anti-real.

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Speaking entirely practically, they are old and moth-eaten. Not only can't they judge a left-wing work of art but they can't judge a fresh work even from their own general point of view. There was one good selection in this year's awards, the novel. On the list of judges for the novel is Robert Morss Lovett, an oversight which the advisory board of the Columbia School of Journalism will undoubtedly correct.

The whole business is silly and I hope it won't be necessary to mention it again in these pages. There are larger fish to fry and what such gentlemen as Royal Cortissoz or Dr. Richard Burton or Governor Wilbur L. Cross or William Lyon Phelps have to say about American life and letters is of no slightest importance to American life and letters. Indeed there is likely to be a transcendent scandal in the near future. The poetry judges, for example, are Governor Cross, Professor Bliss Perry of Harvard and William Brian Hooker, author. I am not certain about Mr. Hooker but the other judges are only slightly on this side of ninety. The year that the advisory committee finds that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow has won the poetry award is apt to exceed anything that has gone before in the way of excitement.

Between Ourselves

READERS of THE NEW MASSES will remember Viola Ilma, who tried to hold a fascist Youth Congress in New York last year. A united front of Communist and Socialist students took the Congress away from Viola, and then John L. Spivak came along and revealed her rather close connections with Nazi leaders in Germany—and Viola was through.

But the remnants of her famous Youth Congress have fallen into other and even queerer hands. Recently an attempt was made to set up this rag tag and bobtail in an American Youth Congress, Inc., in Louisville, Ky. Strange details have sifted out, here and there, of the bizarre and sinister doings in Louisville, but the real story remains to be told.

The documented story of this characteristically fascist attempt to debauch the youth of America will appear in THE NEW MASSES next week. Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt was to have addressed the Congress—but she suddenly decided not to appear; Attorney General Cummings cancelled his engagement at the last minute—for a very good reason. We don't want to appear to be blurbing the story; but it's a good one. Next week.

An exhibition of twelve works by twelve prominent artists has been put on at the A. C. A. Gallery, 52 West 8th Street, until May 21. These drawings, etchings, lithographs and woodblocks are to be sold at a Circus Dance on May 24 at the Irving Plaza Auditorium, for the benefit of the John Reed Club Art School. Gropper, Glintenkamp, Burck, Stuart Davis, Lozowick, Shahn, Limbach, Curry, Gellert, Wm. Steig, Cikovsky and Refregier are the artists represented.

Allan Taub has returned from Chicago, where he established the Mid-Western Bureau of THE NEW MASSES, now at 184 West Washington Street, Room 703. Myron Francis is now in charge of the Mid-Western Bureau.

New Masses Lectures

Thursday, May 16—Debate: Benjamin Goldstein vs. Rabbi Louis I. Newman, "Can Liberalism Prevent War?" 8:30 P.M. Grand Plaza, 160th St. & Prospect Ave. The Bronx. Auspices: Hunts Point Branch American League Against War & Fascism.

Friday, May 17—Michael Gold, "Culture Under Fascism," 8:30 P.M. 3034 Ocean Parkway, Brooklyn. Auspices: West Brighton Workers Center.

Friday, May 17—Benjamin Goldstein, "Why a Rabbi Became a Radical," 8:30 P. M. 608 Cleveland St., Brooklyn. Auspices: East New York Workers Club.

Sunday, May 19—A. B. Magil, "The Truth About Father Coughlin," 8 P.M. at Student House, 359 Jay St., Brooklyn, Auspices: Brooklyn College Chapter, National Student League.

Friday, May 24—Michael Gold, "Culture Under Fascism," 8:30 P. M. 683 Allerton Ave., The Bronx. Auspices: Allerton Workers Club.

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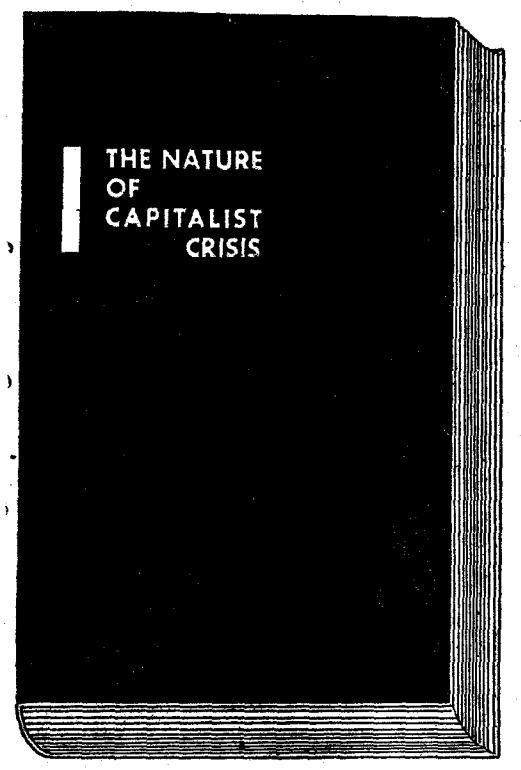

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